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THE COMPLETE WORKS  
OF WILLIAM HAZLITT IN  
TWENTY-ONE VOLUMES

*CENTENARY EDITION*

*Edited by*  
*P. P. HOWE*

VOLUME SEVENTEEN

THIS EDITION IS LIMITED TO  
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# THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM HAZLITT

EDITED BY P. P. HOWE

AFTER THE EDITION OF  
A. R. WALLER AND ARNOLD GLOVER



VOLUME SEVENTEEN

Uncollected  
Essays



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### FRONTISPIECE

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*Hazlitt aged about thirty. From the copy by James Stewart,  
in the Maidstone Museum, of an oil painting by John  
Hazlitt.*

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# UNCOLLECTED ESSAYS

## ESSAY I

### ON THE PRESENT STATE OF PARLIAMENTARY ELOQUENCE

It was a fine impertinence of the younger Pliny, to try to persuade Tacitus, in one of his epistles, that the diffuse style was better than the concise. 'Such a one,' says he, 'aims at the throat of his adversary: now I like to strike him wherever I can.' I may be thought guilty of a like piece of officiousness in the remarks here offered on several of the most prominent of our parliamentary speakers. In general, to suggest advice, or hazard criticism, is to recommend it to others to do something, which we know they either will not or cannot do: or it is to desire them either to please us, or do nothing. The present article may be considered as a marginal note or explanatory addition to a former one, on nearly the same subject—like one of Lord Castlereagh's long parentheses: but I hope there will be more in it. It is a subject of which I wish to make clear work as I go; for it is one to which, if I can once get rid of it, I am not likely to recur.

The haughty tone of invective which I have already ascribed to Lord Chatham, was very different from that didactic style of parliamentary oratory which has since been imported from northern colleges and lecture-rooms. Of this school Sir James Mackintosh and Mr. Brougham may be reckoned at the head. This method consists, not so much in taking a side, as in stating a question. The speaker takes upon him to be the judge rather than the advocate; and if he had the authority of a judge, or could direct the decision, as well as sum up the evidence, it would be all very well. An orator of this stamp does not seat himself on the Opposition side of the House to urge or to reply to particular points, but in a Professor's chair of Humanity, to read a lecture to the tyros of the Treasury-Bench, on the elementary principles and all the possible

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bearings, the objections and answers, the difficulties and the solutions of every question in philosophy, jurisprudence, politics, and political economy,—on war, peace, ‘domestic treason, foreign levy,’ colonial produce, copy-right of authors, prison discipline, the hulks, the corn-bill, the penitentiary, prostitutes, and pick-pockets. Nothing comes amiss to him that can puzzle himself or *pose* his hearers; and he lets out all his knowledge indiscriminately, whether it makes for or against him, with deliberate impartiality and scrupulous exactness. Such persons might be called *Orators of the Human Mind*. They are a little out of their place, it must be owned, in the House of Commons. The object there is—not to put the majority in possession of the common grounds of judging, as in a class of students—(these are taken for granted as already known)—but to carry a point, to gain a verdict for yourself or for truth, by throwing the weight of eloquence and argument into the scale against interest, prejudice, or sophistry. There are retainers enough on the other side to manage for the crown, who are ready to take all advantages without your volunteering to place yourself in their power, or to put excuses in their mouths, to help them out at a dead-lift. If they were candid, if they were disinterested, if they were not hostilely disposed, it might be a feasible scheme to consider a debate as an amicable communication of doubts and lights, as a comparison of strength or a confession of weakness: but why hint a doubt, or start a difficulty needlessly in your own path, which will be eagerly caught at, and made use of in the most insulting manner to defeat a host of real proofs, and overturn the most legitimate conclusions? Why tamper with your own cause? Why play at fast and loose with your object? Why restore the weapons into your enemies’ hands, which you have just wrested from them? Why ‘make a wanton’ of the First Minister of State? It is either vanity, weakness, or indifference to do so. You might as well in confidence tell an adversary where you meant to strike him, point out to him your own weak sides, or wait in courtesy for the blow. Gamesters do not show one another their hands: neither should politicians, who understand what they are about—that is, knaves *will* not, and honest men *ought* not. Others will find out the rotten parts of a question: do you stick to the sound—knowledge is said to be power: but knowledge, applied as we have seen it, neutralises itself. Mere knowledge, to be effectual, must act *in vacuo*: but the House of Commons is by no means a vacuum, an empty receiver for abstract truth and airy speculation. There is the resistance, the refrangibility of dense prejudice and crooked policy: you must concentrate, you must enforce, you must urge to glowing sympathy: and enthusiasm, zeal, perfect conviction

## PARLIAMENTARY ELOQUENCE

on your part, is the only principle that can be brought into play against the cool calculations or gross incentives of selfishness and servility on the opposite side. A middle line of conduct does not excite respect, but contempt. They do not think you sincere, but lukewarm. They give you credit for affectation or timidity, but none for heartiness in a cause, or fidelity to a party. They have more hopes of you than fears. By everlasting subtle distinctions, and hesitating, qualified, retracting dissent from measures you would be thought most to reprobate, you do more harm than good. In theory there are infinite shades of difference, but in practice the question must be decided one way or other : either the Ayes or the Noes must have it. In all such cases, those who are not for us are against us. In political controversy, as in a battle, there are but two sides to chuse between ; and those who create a diversion in favour of established abuses by setting up a third, fanciful, impracticable standard of perfection of their own, in the most critical circumstances, betray the cause they pretend to espouse with such overweening delicacy. For my own part, I hate a fellow who picks a hole in his own coat, who finds a flaw in his own argument, who treats his enemies as if they might become friends, or his friends as if they might become enemies. I hate your shuffling, *shilly-shally* proceedings, and diagonal side-long movements between right and wrong. Fling yourself into the gap at once—either into the arms, or at the heads of Ministers !—

I remember hearing, with some pain and uneasiness, Sir James Mackintosh's maiden speech on the Genoa business. It was a great, but ineffectual effort. The mass of information, of ingenuity, and reasoning, was very prodigious ; but the whole was misdirected, no impression whatever was made. It was like an inaugural dissertation on the general principles of ethics, on the laws of nature and nations, on ancient and modern history—a laboured treatise *de omnibus rebus et quibusdam aliis*. There were all the rules of moral arithmetic, all the items in a profligate political account ; but the bill was not properly cast up, the case was not distinctly made out, the counsel got no damages for his client. Nothing was gained by this motion, nor could there be. When he had brought his heaviest artillery to bear with probable success upon a certain point, he stopped short like a scientific demonstrator (not like a skilful engineer) to show how it might be turned against himself. When he had wound up the charge of treachery or oppression to a climax, he gratuitously suggested a possible plea of necessity, accident, or some other topic, to break the force of his inference ; or he anticipated the answers that might be made to it, as if he was afraid he should not be thought to know all that could be said on both sides of the question. This enlarged



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knowledge of good and evil may be very necessary to a philosopher, but it is very prejudicial to an orator. No man can play the whole game in this manner, blow hot and cold in a breath, or take an entire debate into his own hands, and wield it in which way he pleases. He will find his own load enough for his own shoulders to bear. The exceptions, if you chuse to go into them, multiply faster than the rules: the various complications of the subject distract, instead of convincing: you do your adversary's work for him; the battle is lost without a blow being struck; and a speech of this sceptical kind requires and receives no answer. It falls by its own weight, and buries any body but the Minister under its ruins—or it is left, not a triumphal arch, but a splendid mausoleum of the learning, genius, and eloquence of the speaker.—The Cock-pit of St. Stephen's does not relish this scholastic refinement, this method of holding an argument with a man's self: a little bear-garden, cut-and-thrust work would be much better understood. Sir James has of late improved his tact and knowledge of the House. He has taken up Sir Samuel Romilly's department of questions relating to the amelioration of the penal code and general humanity, and I have no doubt Government will leave him in quiet possession of it. They concede these sort of questions as an amiable diversion, or friendly *bonus*, to the indefatigable spirit of Opposition.

Mr. Brougham is, I conceive, another instance of this analytical style of debating, which 'plays round the head, but does not reach the heart.' There is a want of warmth, of *momentum*, of impulse in his speeches. He loses himself in an infinity of details, as his learned and honourable friend does in a wide sea of speculation. He goes picking up a number of curious pebbles on the shore, and at the outlets of a question—but he does not 'roll all his strength and all his sharpness up into one ball,' to throw at and crush his enemies beneath his feet. He enters into statistics, he calls for documents, he examines accounts. This method is slow, perplexing, circuitous, and not sure. While the evidence is collecting, the question is lost. While one thing is substantiating, another goes out of your mind. These little detached multifarious particulars, which require such industry and sagacity in the speaker to bring them forward, have no clue in the minds of the hearers to connect them together. There is no substratum of prejudice, no cement of interest. They do not grow out of the soil of common feeling and experience, but are set in it; nor do they bear the fruits of conviction. Mr. Brougham can follow the ramifications of an intricate subject, but he is not so well acquainted with the springs of the human mind. He finds himself at the end of his speech,—in the last sentence of it,—just where he was

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at the beginning, or in any other given part of it. He has not acquired any additional *impetus*, is not projected forward with any new degree of warmth or vigour. He was cold, correct, smart, pointed at first, and he continues so still. A repetition of blows, however, is of no use, unless they are struck in the same place: a change of position is not progression. As Sir James Mackintosh's speeches are a decomposition of the moral principles of society, so Mr. Brougham's are an ingenious taking in pieces of its physical mechanism. While they are at work with their experiments, their antagonists are putting in motion the passions, the fears, and antipathies of mankind, and blowing their schemes of reform above the moon.

Talent alone, then, is not sufficient to support a successful Opposition. There is talent on the other side too, of some sort or other; and, in addition, there is another weight, that of influence, which requires a counterpoise. This can be nothing else but fixed principle, but naked honesty, but undisguised enthusiasm. That is the expansive force that must shatter the strongholds of corruption if ever they are shattered, that must make them totter, if ever they are made to totter, about the heads of their possessors. Desire to expose a ministry, and you will do it—if it be, like ours, vulnerable all over. Desire to make a display of yourself, and you will do it, if you have a decent stock of acquirements. Mr. Brougham has a great quantity of combustible materials constantly passing through his hands, but he has not the warmth in his own heart to 'kindle them into a flame of sacred vehemence.' He is not a good hater. He is not an impassioned lover of the popular cause. He is not a Radical orator: he is not a Back-bone debater. He wants nerve, he wants impetuosity. He may divide on a question, but he will never carry it. His circumspection, which he thinks his strength, is in reality his weakness. He makes paltry excuses, unmanly concessions. His political warfare is not a *bellum internecinum*. He commits no mortal offences. He has not yet cut off his retreat. In a word, he trims too much between all parties. A person who does this too long, loses the confidence, loses the cordiality of all parties; loses his character; and when he has once lost that, there is nothing to stand in his way to office and the first honours of the State!—

He who is not indifferent himself will find out, from his own feelings, what it is that interests others in a cause. An honest man is an orator by nature. The late Mr. Whitbread was an honest man, and a true parliamentary speaker. He had no artifices, no tricks, no reserve about him. He spoke point-blank what he thought, and his heart was in his broad, honest, English face. He had as much activity of mind as Mr. Brougham, and paid the same attention to business as

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that gentleman does; but it was with him a matter of feeling, and had nothing of a professional look. His objects were open and direct; and he had a sufficient stock of natural good sense and practical information, not to be made the dupe of sophistry and chicanery. He was always in his place, and ready to do his duty. If a falsehood was stated, he contradicted it instantly in a few plain words: if an act of injustice was palliated, it excited his contempt; if it was justified, it roused his indignation: he retorted a mean insinuation with manly spirit, and never shrunk from a frank avowal of his sentiments. He presented a petition or complaint against some particular grievance better than any one else I ever saw. His manner seemed neither to implicate him in the truth of the charge, nor to signify a wish to disclaim it beforehand. He was merely the organ through which any alleged abuse of power might meet the public ear, and he either answered or redressed, according to the merits of the case upon inquiry. In short, he was the representative of the spontaneous, unsophisticated sense of the English people on public men and public measures. Any plain, well-meaning man, on hearing him speak, would say, 'That is just what I think'; or from observing his manner, would say, 'That is just what I feel.' He was not otherwise a powerful debater or an accomplished speaker. He could not master a general view of any subject, or get up a set speech with effect. One or two that I heard him make (particularly one on the Princess of Wales and the situation of her affairs in 1813, in which he grew pathetic) were complete failures. He could pull down better than he could build up. The irritation of constant contradiction was necessary to his full possession of himself:—give him 'ample scope and verge enough,' and he lost his way. He stuck close to the skirts of Ministry, but he was not qualified to originate or bring to a triumphant conclusion any great political movement. His enthusiasm ran away with his judgment, and was not backed by equal powers of reasoning or imagination. He was a sanguine, high-spirited man, but not a man of genius, or a deep thinker; and his fortitude failed him, when the last fatal blow was given to himself and his party. He could not have drawn up so able a political statement as Mr. Brougham; but he would have more personal adherents in the House of Commons, for he was himself the adherent of a cause.

Mr. Tierney is certainly a better speaker and a cleverer man. But he can never make a leader for want of earnestness. He has no Quixotic enthusiasm in himself; much less any to spare for his followers. He cares nothing (or seems to care nothing) about a question; but he is impatient of absurdity, and has a thorough contempt for the understandings of his opponents. Sharpened by his

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spleen, nothing escapes his acuteness. He makes fine sport for the spectators. He takes up Lord Castlereagh's blunders, and Mr. Vansittart's no-meanings; and retorts them on their heads in the finest style of execution imaginable. It is like being present on a Shrove-Tuesday, and seeing a set of mischievous unfeeling boys throwing at a brace of cocks, and breaking their shins. Mr. Tierney always brings down his man: but beyond this you feel no confidence in him; you take no interest in his movements but as he is instrumental in annoying other people. He (to all appearance) has no great point to carry himself, and no wish to be thought to have any important principle at stake. He is by much too sincere for a hypocrite, but is not enough in earnest for a parliamentary leader. For others to sympathise with you, you must first sympathise with them. When Mr. Whitbread got up to speak, you felt an interest in what he was going to say, in the success of his arguments: when you hear that Mr. Tierney is on his legs, you feel that you shall be amused with an admirable display of dexterity and talent, but are nearly indifferent as to the result. You look on as at an exhibition of extraordinary skill in fencing or prize-fighting.

Of all those who have for some years past aspired by turns to be leaders of the Opposition, Mr. Ponsonby was the person who had the fewest pretensions. He was a literal arguer. He affected great sagacity and judgment, and referred every thing, in a summary way, to the principles of common sense, and the reason of the case. He abounded in truisms, which seldom go far in deciding disputable points. He generally reduced the whole range of the debate into the narrow compass of a self-evident proposition:—to make sure of his object, he began by taking the question for granted, and necessarily failed when he came to the particular application. He was not aware of the maxim, that he who proves too much, proves nothing. His turn of observation was legal, not acute: his manner was dry, but his blows were not hard: his features were flat on his face, and his arguments did not stand out from the question. He might have been a tolerable special-pleader, but he was a bad orator, and, I think, a worse politician. Any one who argues on strict logical grounds must be prepared to go all lengths, or he will be sure to be defeated at every step he takes: but the gentleman's principles were of a very cautious and temporising cast. I have seen him, more than once, give himself great airs over those who took more general views of the subject; and he was very fastidious in the choice of associates, with whom he would condescend to act.

Mr. Ponsonby's style of speaking was neither instructive nor entertaining. In this respect, it was the reverse of Mr. Grattan's, which

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was both. To see the latter make one of his promised motions on Catholic Emancipation, was one of the most extraordinary exhibitions, both bodily and mental, which could possibly be witnessed. You saw a little oddly-compacted figure of a man, with a large head and features,—such as they give to pasteboard masks, or stick upon the shoulders of Punch in the puppet-show,—rolling about like a Mandarin—sawing the air with his whole body from head to foot, sweeping the floor with a roll of parchment, which he held in one hand, and throwing his legs and arms about like the branches of trees tossed by the wind :—every now and then striking the table with impatient vehemence, and, in a sharp, slow, nasal, guttural tone, drawling out, with due emphasis and discretion, a set of little smart antithetical sentences,—all ready-cut and dry, polished and pointed ;—that seemed as if they ‘ would lengthen out in succession to the crack of doom.’ Alliterations were tacked to alliterations,—inference was dove-tailed into inference,—and the whole derived new brilliance and piquancy from the contrast it presented to the uncouthness of the speaker, and the monotony of his delivery. His were compositions that would have done equally well to be said or sung. The rhyme was placed at the beginning instead of the end of each line ; he sharpened the sense on the sound, and clenched an argument by corresponding letters of the alphabet. It must be confessed, that there was something meretricious, as well as alluring, in this style. After the first surprise and startling effect is over, and the devoted champion of his country’s cause goes on ringing the changes on ‘ the Irish People and the Irish Parliament ’—on ‘ the Guinea and the Gallows,’ as the ultimate resources of the English government,—on ‘ ministerial mismanagement, and privileged profligacy,’—we begin to feel that there is nothing in these quaint and affected verbal coincidences more nearly allied to truth than falsehood :—there is a want of directness and simplicity in this warped and garbled style ; and our attention is drawn off from the importance of the subject by a shower of epigrammatic conceits, and fanciful phraseology, in which the orator chuses to veil it. It is hardly enough to say, in defence of this jingle of words, (as well as of the overstrained hyperbolical tone of declamation which accompanies it) that ‘ it is a custom of Ireland.’<sup>1</sup> The same objection may be made to it in point of taste that has been made to the old-fashioned, obsolete practice of cutting trees into the shape of arm-chairs and peacocks, or to that style of landscape-gardening, where

‘ Grove nods to grove, each alley has a brother,  
And half the platform just reflects the other—’

---

<sup>1</sup> ‘ Liberty is a custom of England,’ said a Member of Congress ; who seems also to be of opinion, that *it is a custom more honoured in the breach than the observance.*

## PARLIAMENTARY ELOQUENCE

and I am afraid that this objection cannot be got over, at least, on this side the water.<sup>1</sup>

The best Irish speaker I ever heard (indeed the best speaker without any exception whatever) is Mr. Plunkett; who followed Mr. Grattan in one of the debates on the Catholic question above alluded to. The contrast was not a little striking; and it was certainly in favour of Mr. Plunkett. His style of workmanship was more manly and more masterly. There were no little Gothic ornaments or fantastic excrescences to catch and break the attention: no quaintness, witticism, or conceit. Roubilliac, after being abroad, said, that 'what he had seen there made his own work in Westminster Abbey look like tobacco-pipes.' You had something of the same sort of feeling with respect to Mr. Grattan's artificial and frittered style, after hearing Mr. Plunkett's defence of the same side of the question. He went strait forward to his end with a force equal to his rapidity. He removed all obstacles, as he advanced. He overturned Mr. Banks with his right hand, and Mr. Charles Yorke with his left—the one on a chronological question of the Concordat, and the other as to the origin of the Corporation and Test Acts. One wonders how they ever got up again, or trusted themselves on a ground of matter-of-fact ever after. Mr. Secretary Peele did not offer to put himself in his way. No part of the subject could come amiss to him—history, law, constitutional principle, common feeling, local prejudices, general theory,—all was alike within his reach and his controul. Having settled one point, he passed on to another, carrying his hearers with him:—it was as if he knew all that could be said on the question, and was anxious to impart his knowledge without any desire of shining. There was no affectation, no effort, but equal ease and earnestness. Every thing was brought to bear that could answer his purpose, and there was nothing superfluous. His eloquence swept along like a river,

'Without o'erflowing, full.'

Every step told: every sentence went to account. I cannot say that there was any thing very profound or original in argument, imposing in imagination, or impassioned in sentiment, in any part of this address—

<sup>1</sup> I by no means wish to preclude Mr. Phillips from trying annually to naturalise his favourite mode of oratory at watering-places in this country, or in Evangelical Societies held at the Egyptian-hall, where it is not out of character. He may there assure his hearers, with great impunity, that Dr. Franklin's orthodoxy was never called in question; and rank Moses and Mahomet together as true prophets (by virtue of the first letter of their names), in opposition to the infidelity of Paine and Priestly, who go together for the same reason—

Like Juno's Swans, link'd and inseparable.

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but it was throughout impregnated with as much thought, imagination and passion as the House would be likely to understand or sympathise with. It acted like a loadstone to the feelings of the House; and the speaker raised their enthusiasm, and carried their convictions as far as he wished, or as it was practicable. The effect was extraordinary: the impression grew stronger from first to last. No one stirred the whole time, and, at the end, the lobbies were crowded with members going up stairs and saying, 'Well, this is a speech worth going without one's dinner to hear,' (Oh, unequivocal testimony of applause!) 'there has been nothing like this since the time of Fox,' &c. For myself, I never heard any other speech that I would have given three farthings to have made. It did not make the same figure in the newspapers the next day; for it was but indifferently reported, owing to the extreme fluency with which it was delivered. There was no boggling, no straggling, irrelevant matter;—you could not wait for him at the end of a long parenthesis, and go on with your report as if nothing had happened in the interval, as is sometimes the case,<sup>1</sup>—and besides, for the reason above given, it was a speech better calculated to strike in the hearing than the perusal; for though it was fully up to the tone of the House, the public mind can bear stronger meats. Another such speech would have decided the question, and made the difference of four votes by which it was lost. While the impression was fresh in the mind, it was not easy for any one, pretending to honesty, to look his neighbour in the face and vote against the motion. But Mr. Plunkett, in the mean time, sailed for Ireland. Any one who can speak as he can, and is a friend to his own, or any other country, ought not to let the present men retain their seats six months longer. Nothing but the will is wanting.—The ability, I will venture to say, is there.

And what shall I say of Lord Castlereagh—that spouter without beginning, middle, or end—who has not an idea in his head, nor a word to say for himself—who carries the House of Commons by his manner alone—who bows and smiles assent and dissent—who makes a dangling proposition of his person, and is himself a drooping figure of speech—what shall I say of this inanimate automaton? Nothing! For what can be said of him?

'Come then, expressive silence, muse his praise.'<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The best speeches are the worst reported, the worst are made better than they are. They both find a convenient newspaper level.

<sup>2</sup> His Lordship is said to speak French with as little hesitation as he does his native tongue; and once made a speech in that language to the Congress for three hours without interruption. The sentiments, we may be sure, were not English.

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Neither have I any thing to say of the style of eloquence of Mr. Alderman Wood, or Mr. Waithman, or Sir W. Curtis—except that the latter always appears to me a very fit and lively representative of the good living, drinking, and eating of the city. This is but reasonable. The bodies of the city, not their minds, should be represented. A large turtle in the House (with a proxy to the minister) would answer the purpose just as well.

Mr. Wilberforce is a speaker whom it is difficult to class either with ministers or opposition. His character and his pretensions are altogether equivocal. He is a man of some ability, and, at one time, had considerable influence. He is what might be called 'a sweet speaker': his silver voice floats and glides up and down in the air, as if it was avoiding every occasion of offence, and dodging the question through its various avenues of reason and interest.

—' In many a winding bout  
Of melting softness long drawn out.'

There is a finical flexibility of purpose, and a cautious curiosity of research, that would put you in pain for him, if the want of proper self-respect did not take away all common fellow-feeling. His stratagems are so over-wrought that you wish them to fail: his evasions are so slippery and yet so palpable that you laugh in his face. Mr. Wilberforce is a man that has always two strings to his bow: as an orator, he is a kind of lay-preacher in parliament. He is at continual *hawk and buzzard* between character and conscience, between popularity and court favour, between his loyalty and his religion, between this world and the next. Is not this something like trying to serve God and Mammon? He is anxious to stand fair with the reflecting part of the community, without giving umbrage to power. He is shocked at vice in low stations:

' But 'tis the fall degrades her to a whore;  
Let greatness own her, and she's mean no more.'

He would go with the popular cause as long as it was popular, and gave him more weight than he lost by it; but would desert it

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Or was it on that occasion that Prince Talleyrand made his observation, 'that speech was given to man to conceal his thoughts'? I cannot agree with Mr. Hobhouse in his compliment to the expression which Isabey has given to Lord Castlereagh's face in the *insulated* figure of him in the picture of the Congress. An old classical friend of Mr. Hobhouse's would have supplied a better interpretation of it. But I do not think the French artist has done his Lordship justice. His features are marked, but the expression is dormant.



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the instant it became obnoxious, and that an obstinate adherence to it was likely to deprive him of future opportunities of doing good. He had rather be on the right side than the wrong, if he loses nothing by it. His reputation costs him nothing; though he always takes care to save appearances. His virtues compound for his vices in a very amicable manner. His humanity is at the horizon, three thousand miles off,—his servility stays at home, at the beck of the minister. He unbinds the chains of Africa, and helps (we trust without meaning it) to rivet those of his own country, and of Europe. As a general truth,—(not meaning any undue application in the present instance,) it may be affirmed, that there is not a more insignificant as well as a dangerous character crawling between heaven and earth, than that of the pretended patriot, and philanthropist, who has not courage to take the plain reward of vice or virtue—who crouches to authority, and yet dreads the censure of the world, who gives a sneaking casting vote on the side of conscience only when he can do it with impunity,—or else throws the weight of his reputation into the scale of his interest and the profligacy of others—who makes an affectation of principle a stalking-horse to his pitiful desire of distinction, and betrays a cause, sooner than commit himself.

‘Out upon such half-faced fellowship.’ We have another example of trumpery ambition in the person of Mr. C. Wynne; who, officious, indefatigable in his petty warfare with the abuses of power, is chiefly anxious to stand well with those who sanction them. He interprets the text literally, *not to do evil that good may come*. He is so fearful of the imputation of the least wrong, that he will never do or let any one else do the greatest right. *Summum jus summa injuria*, has never entered his head. He is the dog in the political manger: a technical marplot. He takes a systematic delight in giving a lift to his enemies, and in hampering his friends. He is a regular whipper-in on the side of opposition, to all those who go but a hair’s-breadth beyond his pragmatistical notions of discretion and propriety. He sets up for a balance-master of the constitution and, by insisting on its never deviating from its erect, perpendicular position, is sure to have it overturned. He professes to be greatly scandalised at the abuses and corruptions in our ancient institutions, which are ‘as notorious as the sun at noon-day,’ and would have them removed—but he is much more scandalised at those indiscreet persons who bring to light any of these notorious abuses, in order to have them remedied. He is more angry at those with whom he differs in the smallest iota than at those who differ from him *toto cælo*: and is at mortal enmity with every antiministerial measure that is not so clogged with imbecility and objections as to be impracticable or absolutely unavailing. He is

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therefore a bad partisan, and does little mischief, only because he is little attended to. Indeed, his voice is against him.

I did not much like Sir Samuel Romilly's significant, oracular way of laying down the law in the House :—his self-important assumption of second-hand truths, and his impatience of contradiction, as if he gave his time there to humanity for *nothing*. He was too solemn a speaker : as Garrow was too flippant and fluent. The latter appeared to have nothing to do but to talk nonsense *by the yard*, for the pleasure of exposing himself or being exposed by others. He might be said to hold in his hand a general retainer for absurdity, and to hold his head up in the pillory of his own folly with a very unabashed and unblushing gaiety of demeanour. Lawyers, as a general rule, are the very worst speakers in the House : if there are a few nominal exceptions, it is because they are not lawyers.

I do not recollect any other speaker of importance but Mr. Canning ; and he requires a chapter by himself. Thus then I would try to estimate him.—The orator and the writer do not always belong to the same class of intellectual character ; nor is it, I think, in general, fair to judge of the merit of popular harangues by reducing them to the standard of literary compositions. Something,—a great deal,—is to be given to the suddenness of the emergency, the want of preparation, the instantaneous and effectual, but passing appeal to individual characters, feelings, and events. The speaker has less time allowed him to enforce his purpose, and to procure the impression he aims at than the writer ; and he is therefore entitled to produce it by less scrupulous, by more obvious and fugitive means. He must strike the iron while it is hot. The blow must be prompt and decisive. He must mould the convictions and purposes of his hearers while they are under the influence of passion and circumstances,—as the glass-blower moulds the vitreous fluid with his breath. If he can take the popular mind by surprise, and stamp on it, while warm, the impression desired, it is not to be demanded whether the same means would have been equally successful on cool reflection or after the most mature deliberation. That is not the question at issue. At a moment's notice the expert debater is able to start some topic, some view of a subject, which answers the purpose of the moment. He can suggest a dextrous evasion of his adversaries' objections, he knows when to seize and take advantage of the impulse of popular feeling, he is master of the dazzling fence of argument, ' the punto, the stoccado, the reverso,' the shifts, and quirks, and palpable topics of debate ; he can wield these at pleasure, and employ them to advantage on the spur of the occasion—this is all that can be required of him ; for it is all that is necessary, and all that he undertakes to do. That

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another could bring forward more weighty reasons, offer more wholesome advice, convey more sound and extensive information in an indefinite period, is nothing to the purpose; for all this wisdom and knowledge would be of no avail in the supposed circumstances; the critical opportunity for action would be lost, before any use could be made of it. The one thing needful in public speaking is not to say what is best, but the best that can be said in a given time, place, and circumstance. The great qualification therefore of a leader in debate (as of a leader in fight) is presence of mind: he who has not this, wants every thing, and he who has it, may be forgiven almost all other deficiencies. The current coin of his discourses may be light and worthless in itself; but if it is always kept bright and ready for immediate use, it will pass unquestioned; and the public voice will affix to his name the praise of a sharp-witted, able, fluent, and eloquent speaker. We 'no further seek his merits to disclose, or scan his frailties in their brief abode,'—the popular ear and echo of popular applause. What he says may be trite, pert, shallow, contradictory, false, unfounded, and sophistical; but it was what was wanted for the occasion, and it told with those who heard it. Let it stop there, and all is well. The rest is forgotten; nor is it worth remembering.

But Mr. Canning has an ill habit of printing his speeches: and I doubt whether the same oratorical privileges can be extended to *printed* speeches; or to this gentleman's speeches in general, even though they should not be printed. Whether afterwards committed to the press or not, they have evidently, I think, been first committed, with great care, to paper or to memory. They have all the marks, and are chargeable with all the *malice prepense* of written compositions. They are not occasional effusions, but set harangues. They are elaborate *impromptus*; deeply concerted and highly polished pieces of extempore ingenuity. The repartee has been conceived many months before the luckless observation which gives ostensible birth to it; and an argument woven into a debate is sure to be the counterpart or fag-end of some worn-out sophism of several years' standing. Mr. Canning is not so properly an orator as an author reciting his own compositions. He foresees (without much of the spirit of prophecy) what will, may, or can be said on some well-conned subject, and gets up, by anticipation, a tissue of excellent good conceits, indifferent bad arguments, classical quotations, and showy similes, which he contrives, by a sort of rhetorical join-hand, to tack on to some straggling observation dropped by some Honourable Member,—and so goes on, with folded arms and sonorous voice, neither quickened nor retarded, neither elevated nor depressed by the '*hear him's*' that now rise on the one side, or are now echoed from the other';—never diverted into

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laughing gaiety, never hurried into incontrollable passion—till he is regularly delivered in the course of the same number of hours of the labour of weeks and months. To those who are in the secret of the arts of debating, who are versed in the complicated tactics of parliamentary common-place, there is nothing very mysterious in the process, though it startles the uninitiated. The fluency, the monotony, the unimpressible, imposing style of his elocution,—‘swinging slow with sullen roar,’ like the alternate oscillation of a pendulum—afraid of being thrown off his balance—never trusting himself with the smallest inflection of tone or manner from the impulse of the moment,—all shew that the speaker relies on the tenaciousness of his memory, not on the quickness and fertility of his invention. Mr. Canning, I apprehend, never answered a speech: he answers, or affects to answer some observation in a speech, and then manufactures a long *tirade* out of his own ‘mother-wit and arts *well-known* before.’ He *caps* an oration, as school-boys cap verses; and gets up his oracular responses, as Sidrophel and Whackum did theirs, by having met with his customers of old. From that time he has the debate entirely in his own hands, and exercises over it ‘sole sovereign sway and masterdom.’ One of these spontaneous mechanical sallies of his resembles a *voluntary* played on a barrel-organ: it is a kind of Panharmonic display of wit and wisdom—such as Mr. Canning possesses! The amplest stores of his mind are unfolded to their inmost source—the classic lore, the historic page, the philosophic doubt, the sage reply, the sprightly allusion, the delicate irony, the happy turning of a period or insinuation of a paragraph with senatorial dignity and Ovidian grace—are all here concocted, studied, revised, varnished over, till the sense aches at their glossy beauty and sickens at hopeless perfection. Our modern orator’s thoughts have been declared by some to have all the elegance of the antique; I should say, they have only the fragility and smoothness of plaster-cast copies!

If I were compelled to characterise Mr. Canning’s style by a single trait, I should say that he is a mere *parodist* in verse or prose, in reasoning or in wit. He transposes arguments as he does images, and makes sophistry of the one, and burlesque of the other. ‘What’s serious, he turns to farce.’ This is perhaps, not art in him, so much as nature. The specific levity of his mind causes it to subsist best in the rarified atmosphere of indifference and scorn: it attaches most interest and importance to the slight and worthless. There is a striking want of solidity and keeping in this person’s character. The frivolous, the equivocal, is his delight—the element in which he speaks, and writes, and has his being, as an orator and poet. By applying to low and contemptible objects the language or ideas which

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have been appropriated to high and swelling contemplations, he reduces the latter to the same paltry level, or renders the former doubly ridiculous. On the same principle, or from not feeling the due force and weight of different things, as they affect either the imagination or the understanding, he brings the slenderest and most evanescent analogies to bear out the most important conclusions; establishes some fact in history by giving it the form of an idle interrogation, like a schoolboy declaiming on he knows not what; and thinks to overturn the fixed sentiment of a whole people by an interjection of surprise at what he knows to be unavoidable and unanswerable. There is none of the gravity of the statesman, of the enthusiasm of the patriot, the impatient zeal of the partisan, in Mr. Canning. We distinguish through the disguise of pompous declamation, or the affectation of personal consequence, only the elegant trifler, the thoughtless epigrammatist, spreading 'a windy fan of painted plumes,' to catch the breath of popular applause, or to flutter in the tainted breeze of court-favour. 'As those same plumes, so seems he vain and light,'—never applying his hand to useful action, or his mind to sober truth. A thing's being evident, is to him a reason for attempting to falsify it: its being right is a reason for straining every nerve to evade or defeat it at all events. It might appear, that with him inversion is the order of nature. 'Trifles light as air, are' to his understanding, 'confirmations strong as proofs of holy writ:' and he winks and shuts his apprehension up to the most solemn and momentous truths as gross and vulgar errors. His political creed is of an entirely fanciful and fictitious texture—a kind of moral, religious, political, and sentimental *filligree-work*: or it is made up of monstrous pretexts, and idle shadows, and spurious theories, and mock-alarms. Hence his gravest reasonings have very much an air of concealed irony; and it might sometimes almost be suspected that, by his partial, loose, and unguarded sophisms, he meant to abandon the very cause he professes to magnify and extol.<sup>1</sup> It is indeed, his boast, his pride, his pleasure, 'to make the worse appear the better reason,' which he does with the pertness of a school-boy and the effrontery of a prostitute: he assumes indecent postures in the debate, confounds the sense of right and wrong by his licentious disregard of both, puts honesty out of countenance by the familiarity of his proposals, makes a jest of principle,—'takes the rose from the fair forehead of a virtuous cause, and plants a blister there.'

The House of Lords does not at present display much of the

<sup>1</sup> See his panegyric on the late King, his defence of the House of Commons, and his eulogy on the practical liberty of the English Constitution in his Liverpool Dinner Speech.

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aristocracy of talent. The scene is by no means so amusing or dramatic here as in the House of Commons. Every speaker seems to claim his privilege of peerage in the awful attention of his auditors, which is granted while there is any reasonable hope of a return : but it is not easy to hear Lord Grenville repeat the same thing regularly four times over, in different words—to listen to the Marquis of Wellesley, who never lowers his voice for four hours from the time he begins, nor utters the commonest syllable in a tone below that in which Pierre curses the Senate—Lord Holland might have other pretensions to alacrity of mind than an impediment of speech, and Lord Liverpool might introduce less of the *vis inertie* of office into his official harangues, than he does. Lord Ellenborough was great ‘in the extremity of an oath.’ Lord Eldon, ‘his face ’twixt tears and smiles contending,’ never loses his place or his temper. It is a pity to see Lord Erskine sit silent, who was once a popular and powerful speaker ; and when he does get up to speak, you wish he had said nothing. This nobleman, the other day, on his return to Scotland after an absence of fifty years, made a striking speech on the instinctive and indissoluble attachment of all persons to the country where they are born,—which he considered as an innate and unerring principle of the human mind ; and, in expatiating on the advantages of patriotism, argued by way of illustration, that if it were not for this original dispensation of Providence, attaching and, as it were, *rooting* every one to the spot where he was bred and born,—civil society should never have existed, nor mankind have been reclaimed from the barbarous and wandering way of life, to which they were in the first instance addicted ! How these persons should become attached by habit to places where it appears, from their vagabond dispositions, they never stayed at all, is an over-sight of the speaker which remains unexplained. On the same occasion, the learned Lord, in order to produce an effect, observed that when, advancing farther north, he should come to the old playground near his father’s mansion, where he used to play at ball when a child, his sensations would be of a most affecting description. This is possible ; but his Lordship returned homewards the next day, thinking, no doubt, he had anticipated all the sentiment of the situation. This puts one in mind of the story one has heard of Tom Sheridan, who told his father he had been down to the bottom of a coal-pit. ‘Then, you are a fool, Tom,’ said the father. ‘Why so, Sir ?’ ‘Because,’ said the other, ‘it would have answered all the same purpose *to have said you had been down !*’

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## ESSAY II

### ON CONSISTENCY OF OPINION

‘——Servetur ad imum  
Qualis ab inceptu processerit, et sibi constet.’

MANY people boast of being masters in their own house. I pretend to be master of my own mind. I should be sorry to have an ejection served upon me for any notions I may chuse to entertain there. Within that little circle I would fain be an absolute monarch. I do not profess the spirit of martyrdom; I have no ambition to march to the stake or up to a masked battery, in defence of an hypothesis: I do not court the rack: I do not wish to be flayed alive for affirming that two and two make four, or any other intricate proposition: I am shy of bodily pains and penalties, which some are fond of, imprisonment, fine, banishment, confiscation of goods: but if I do not prefer the independence of my mind to that of my body, I at least prefer it to every thing else. I would avoid the arm of power, as I would escape from the fangs of a wild beast: but as to the opinion of the world, I see nothing formidable in it. ‘It is the eye of childhood that fears a painted devil.’ I am not to be brow-beat or wheedled out of any of my settled convictions. Opinion to opinion, I will face any man. Prejudice, fashion, the cant of the moment, go for nothing; and as for the reason of the thing, it can only be supposed to rest with me or another, in proportion to the pains we have taken to ascertain it. Where the pursuit of truth has been the habitual study of any man’s life, the love of truth will be his ruling passion. ‘Where the treasure is, there the heart is also.’ Every one is most tenacious of that to which he owes his distinction from others. Kings love power, misers gold, women flattery, poets reputation—and philosophers truth, when they can find it. They are right in cherishing the only privilege they inherit. If ‘to be wise were to be obstinate,’ I might set up for as great a philosopher as the best of them; for some of my conclusions are as fixed and as incorrigible to proof as need be. I am attached to them in consequence of the pains, the anxiety, and the waste of time they have cost me. In fact, I should not well know what to do without them at this time of day; nor how to get others to supply their place. I would quarrel with the best friend I have sooner than acknowledge the absolute right of the Bourbons. I see Mr. —— seldomer than I did, because I cannot agree with him about the *Catalogue Raisonné*. I remember once saying to this gentleman, a great while ago, that I did not seem to have altered

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any of my ideas since I was sixteen years old. 'Why then,' said he, 'you are no wiser now than you were then !' I might make the same confession, and the same retort would apply still. Coleridge used to tell me, that this pertinacity was owing to a want of sympathy with others. What he calls *sympathising with others* is their admiring him, and it must be admitted that he varies his battery pretty often, in order to accommodate himself to this sort of mutual understanding. But I do not agree in what he says of me. On the other hand, I think that it is my sympathising *beforehand* with the different views and feelings that may be entertained on a subject, that prevents my retracting my judgment, and flinging myself into the contrary extreme *afterwards*. If you proscribe all opinion opposite to your own, and impertinently exclude all the evidence that does not make for you, it stares you in the face with double force when it breaks in unexpectedly upon you, or if at any subsequent period it happens to suit your interest or convenience to listen to objections which vanity or prudence had hitherto overlooked. But if you are aware from the first suggestion of a subject, either by subtlety of tact, or close attention, of the full force of what others possibly feel and think of it, you are not exposed to the same vacillation of opinion. The number of grains and scruples, of doubts and difficulties, thrown into the scale while the balance is yet undecided, add to the weight and steadiness of the determination. He who anticipates his opponent's arguments, confirms while he corrects his own reasonings. When a question has been carefully examined in all its bearings, and a principle is once established, it is not liable to be overthrown by any new facts which have been arbitrarily and petulantly set aside, nor by every wind of idle doctrine rushing into the interstices of a hollow speculation, shattering it in pieces, and leaving it a mockery and a bye-word ; like those tall, gawky, staring, pyramidal erections which are seen scattered over different parts of the country, and are called the *Follies* of different gentlemen ! A man may be confident in maintaining a side, as he has been cautious in chusing it. If after making up his mind strongly in one way, to the best of his capacity and judgment, he feels himself inclined to a very violent revulsion of sentiment, he may generally rest assured that the change is in himself and his motives, not in the reason of things.

I cannot say that, from my own experience, I have found that the persons most remarkable for sudden and violent changes of principle have been cast in the softest or most susceptible mould. All their notions have been exclusive, bigoted, and intolerant. Their want of consistency and moderation has been in exact proportion to their want of candour and comprehensiveness of mind. Instead of being



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the creatures of sympathy, open to conviction, unwilling to give offence by the smallest difference of sentiment, they have (for the most part) been made up of mere antipathies—a very repulsive sort of personages—at odds with themselves, and with every body else. The slenderness of their pretensions to philosophical inquiry has been accompanied with the most presumptuous dogmatism. They have been persons of that narrowness of view and headstrong self-sufficiency of purpose, that they could see only one side of a question at a time, and whichever they pleased. There is a story somewhere in Don Quixote, of two champions coming to a shield hung up against a tree with an inscription written on each side of it. Each of them maintained, that the words were what was written on the side next him, and never dreamt, till the fray was over, that they might be different on the opposite side of the shield. It would have been a little more extraordinary if the combatants had changed sides in the heat of the scuffle, and stoutly denied that there were any such words on the opposite side as they had before been bent on sacrificing their lives to prove were the only ones it contained. Yet such is the very situation of some of our modern polemics. They have been of all sides of the question, and yet they cannot conceive how an honest man can be of any but one—that which they hold at present. It seems that they are afraid to look their old opinions in the face, lest they should be fascinated by them once more. They banish all doubts of their own sincerity by inveighing against the motives of their antagonists. There is no salvation out of the pale of their strange inconsistency. They reduce common sense and probity to the straitest possible limits—the breasts of themselves and their patrons. They are like people out at sea on a very narrow plank, who try to push every body else off. Is it that they have so little faith in the cause to which they have become such staunch converts, as to suppose that, should they allow a grain of sense to their old allies and new antagonists, they will have more than they? Is it that they have so little consciousness of their own disinterestedness, that they feel if they allow a particle of honesty to those who now differ with them, they will have more than they? These opinions must needs be of a very fragile texture which will not stand the shock of the least acknowledged opposition, and which lay claim to respectability by stigmatising all who do not hold them as ‘sots, and knaves, and cowards.’ There is a want of well-balanced feeling in every such instance of extravagant versatility; a something crude, unripe, and harsh, that does not hit a judicious palate, but sets the teeth on edge to think of. ‘I had rather hear my mother’s cat mew, or a wheel grate on the axle-tree, than one of these same metre-ballad-

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mongers' chaunt his incondite retrograde lays without rhyme and without reason.

The principles and professions change : the man remains the same. There is the same spirit at the bottom of all this pragmatism, fickleness and virulence, whether it runs into one extreme or another :—to wit, a confinement of view, a jealousy of others, an impatience of contradiction, a want of liberality in construing the motives of others either from monkish pedantry, or a concealed overweening reference of every thing to our own fancies and feelings. There is something to be said, indeed, for the nature of the political machinery, for the whirling motion of the revolutionary wheel which has of late wrenched men's understandings almost asunder, and 'amazed the very faculties of eyes and ears'; but still this is hardly a sufficient reason, why the adept in the old as well as the new school should take such a prodigious latitude himself, while at the same time he makes so little allowance for others. His whole creed need not be turned topsyturvy, from the top to the bottom, even in times like these. He need not, in the rage of party-spirit, discard the proper attributes of humanity, the common dictates of reason. He need not outrage every former feeling, nor trample on every customary decency, in his zeal for reform, or in his greater zeal against it. If his mind, like his body, has undergone a total change of essence, and purged off the taint of all its early opinions, he need not carry about with him, or be haunted in the persons of others with, the phantoms of his altered principles to loathe and execrate them. He need not (as it were) pass an act of attainder on all his thoughts, hopes, wishes, from youth upwards, to offer them at the shrine of matured servility : he need not become one vile antithesis, a living and ignominious satire on himself. Mr. Wordsworth has hardly, I should think, so much as a single particle of feeling left in his whole composition, the same that he had twenty years ago ; not 'so small a drop of pity,' for what he then was, 'as a wren's eye,'—except that I do not hear that he has given up his theory that poetry should be written in the language of prose, or applied for an injunction against the Lyrical Ballads. I will wager a trifle, that our ingenious poet will not concede to any patron, (how noble and munificent soever), that the Leech Gatherer is not a fit subject of the Muse, and would sooner resign the stamp-distributorship of two counties, than burn that portion of the Recluse, a Poem, which has been given to the world under the title of the Excursion. The tone, however, of Mr. Wordsworth's poetical effusions requires a little revision to adapt it to the progressive improvement in his political sentiments : for, as far as I understand the Poems themselves or the Preface, his whole system turns upon this,

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that the thoughts, the feelings, the expressions of the common people in country places are the most refined of all others ; at once the most pure, the most simple, and the most sublime :—yet, with one stroke of his prose-pen, he disfranchises the whole rustic population of Westmoreland and Cumberland from voting at elections, and says there is not a man among them that is not a knave in grain. In return, he lets them still retain the privilege of expressing their sentiments in select and natural language in the Lyrical Ballads. So much for poetical justice and political severity ! An author's political theories sit loose upon him, and may be changed like his clothes. His literary vanity, alas ! sticks to him like his skin, and survives in its first gloss and sleekness, amidst

‘ The wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds.’

Mr. Southey still makes experiments on metre, not on governments, and seems to think the last resort of English liberty is in court-iambics. Still the same upstart self-sufficiency, still the same itch of new-fangled innovation directed into a new channel, still the same principle of favouritism, still the same overcharged and splenetic hostility—all is right that he approves, all is wrong that opposes his views in the smallest particular. There is no inconsistency in all these anomalies. Absurdity is uniform ; egotism is the same thing ; a limited range of comprehension is a habit of mind that a man seldom gets the better of, and may distinguish equally the Pantisocratist or Constitutional Association-monger.

To quit this, which is rather a stale topic, as well as a hopeless one, and give some instances of a change of sentiment in individuals, which may serve for materials of a history of opinion in the beginning of the 19th century :—A gentleman went to live, some years ago, in a remote part of the country, and as he did not wish to affect singularity he used to have two candles on his table of an evening. A romantic acquaintance of his in the neighbourhood, smitten with the love of simplicity and equality, used to come in, and without ceremony snuff one of them out, saying, it was a shame to indulge in such extravagance, while many a poor cottager had not even a rush-light to see to do their evening's work by. This might be about the year 1802, and was passed over as among the ordinary occurrences of the day. In 1816 (oh ! fearful lapse of time, pregnant with strange mutability), the same enthusiastic lover of economy, and hater of luxury, asked his thoughtless friend to dine with him in company with a certain lord, and to lend him his man servant to wait at table ; and just before they were sitting down to dinner, he heard him say to the servant in a sonorous whisper—‘ and be sure you don't forget to have

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six candles on the table!’ Extremes meet. The event here was as true to itself as the oscillation of the pendulum. My informant, who understands moral equations, had looked for this reaction, and noted it down as characteristic. The impertinence in the first instance was the cue to the ostentatious servility in the second. The one was the fulfilment of the other, like the type and anti-type of a prophecy. No—the keeping of the character at the end of fourteen years was as unique as the keeping of the thought to the end of the fourteen lines of a Sonnet! Would it sound strange if I were to whisper it in the reader’s ear, that it was the same person who was thus anxious to see six candles on the table to receive a lord, who once (in ages past) said to me, that ‘he saw nothing to admire in the eloquence of such men as Mansfield and Chatham; and what did it all end in, but their being made Lords?’ It is better to be a lord than a lacquey to a lord. So we see that the swelling pride and preposterous self-opinion which exalts itself above the mightiest, looking down upon, and braving the boasted pretensions of the highest rank and the most brilliant talents as nothing, compared with its own conscious powers and silent unmoved self-respect, grovels and licks the dust before titled wealth, like a lacquered slave, the moment it can get wages and a livery! Would Milton or Marvel have done thus?

Mr. Coleridge, indeed, sets down this outrageous want of keeping to an excess of sympathy, and there is, after all, some truth in his suggestion. There is a craving after the approbation and concurrence of others natural to the mind of man. It is difficult to sustain the weight of an opinion singly for any length of way. The intellect languishes without cordial encouragement and support. It exhausts both strength and patience to be always striving against the stream. *Contra audentior ito*—is the motto but of few. Public opinion is always pressing upon the mind, and, like the air we breathe, acts unseen, unfelt. It supplies the living current of our thoughts, and infects without our knowledge. It taints the blood, and is taken into the smallest pores. The most sanguine constitutions are, perhaps, the most exposed to its influence. But public opinion has its source in power, in popular prejudice, and is not always in accord with right reason, or a high and abstracted imagination. Which path to follow where the two roads part? The heroic and romantic resolution prevails at first in high and heroic tempers. They think to scale the heights of truth and virtue at once with him ‘whose genius had angelic wings, and fed on manna,’—but after a time find themselves baffled, toiling on in an uphill road, without friends, in a cold neighbourhood, without aid or prospect of success. The poet

‘Like a worm goes by the way.’

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He hears murmurs loud or suppressed, meets blank looks or scowling faces, is exposed to the pelting of the pitiless press, and is stunned by the shout of the mob, that gather round him to see what sort of a creature a poet and a philosopher is. What is there to make him proof against all this? A strength of understanding steeled against temptation, and a dear love of truth that smiles opinion to scorn? These he perhaps has not. A lord passes in his coach. Might he not get up, and ride out of the reach of the rabble-rout? He is invited to stop dinner. If he stays he may insinuate some wholesome truths. He drinks in rank poison—flattery! He recites some verses to the ladies, who smile delicious praise, and thank him through their tears. The master of the house suggests a happy allusion in the turn of an expression. ‘There’s sympathy.’ This is better than the company he lately left. Pictures, statues meet his raptured eye. Our Ulysses finds himself in the gardens of Alcinous: our truant is fairly caught. He wanders through enchanted ground. Groves, classic groves, nod unto him, and he hears ‘ancestral voices’ hailing him as brother-bard! He sleeps, dreams, and wakes cured of his thriftless prejudices and morose philanthropy. He likes this courtly and popular sympathy better. ‘He looks up with awe to kings; with honour to nobility; with reverence to magistrates,’ &c. He no longer breathes the air of heaven and his own thoughts, but is steeped in that of palaces and courts, and finds it agree better with his constitutional temperament. Oh! how sympathy alters a man from what he was!

‘I’ve heard of hearts unkind,  
Kind deeds with coldness still returning;  
Alas! the gratitude of man  
Has oftener set me mourning.’

A spirit of contradiction, a wish to monopolise all wisdom, will not account for uniform consistency, for it is sure to defeat and turn against itself. It is ‘every thing by turns, and nothing long.’ It is warped and crooked. It cannot bear the least opposition, and sooner than acquiesce in what others approve it will change sides in a day. It is offended at every resistance to its captious, domineering humour, and will quarrel for straws with its best friends. A person under the guidance of this demon, if every whimsy or occult discovery of his own is not received with acclamation by one party, will wreak his spite by deserting to the other, and carry all his talent for disputation with him, sharpened by rage and disappointment. A man, to be steady in a cause, should be more attached to the truth than to the acquiescence of his fellow-citizens. A young student, who came up

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to town a few years since with some hypercritical refinements on the modern philosophy to introduce him to the Gamaliels of the age, but who would allow no one else to have a right view of the common doctrines of the school, or to be able to assign a reason for the faith that was in him, was sent to Coventry by the true adepts, who were many of them as wise and as fastidious as himself. He therefore turned round upon the whole set for this indignity, and has been playing off the heavy artillery of his scurrilous abuse, his verbal logic, and the powerful distinctions of the civil and canon law upon the devoted heads of his tasteless associates; 'perpetual volley, arrowy sleet,' ever since! It is needless to mention names. The learned gentleman having left his ungrateful party and unprofitable principles in dudgeon, has gone into the opposite extreme like mad, sticks at nothing, is callous to public opinion, so that he pleases his employers, and can become 'a thorn in the side of freedom'; and fairly takes the bridle in his teeth, stop him who can. A more obstinate being never took pen in hand. Yet, by agreeing to his conclusions, and subscribing to his arguments (such as they are) it would be still possible to make him give up every one of his absurdities in succession, and to drive him to set up another New Daily Paper against himself!

I can hardly consider Mr. Coleridge as a deserter from the cause he first espoused, unless one could tell what cause he ever heartily espoused, or what party he ever belonged to, in downright earnest. He has not been inconsistent with himself at different times, but at all times. He is a sophist, a casuist, a rhetorician, what you please; and might have argued or declaimed to the end of his breath on one side of a question or another, but he never was a pragmatist fellow. He lived in a round of contradictions, and never came to a settled point. His fancy gave the cue to his judgment, and his vanity set his invention afloat in whatever direction he could find most scope for it, or most *sympathy*, that is, admiration. His *Life and Opinions* might naturally receive the title of one of Hume's Essays—'A Sceptical Solution of Sceptical Doubts.' To be sure, his *WATCHMAN* and his *FRIEND* breathe a somewhat different tone on subjects of a particular description, both of them apparently pretty high-raised, but whoever will be at the pains to examine them closely, will find them to be *voluntaries*, fugues, solemn capriccios, not set compositions with any *malice prepense* in them, or much practical meaning. I believe some of his friends, who were indebted to him for the suggestion of plausible reasons for conformity, and an opening to a more qualified view of the letter of their paradoxical principles, have lately disgusted him by the virulence and extravagance to which they have carried hints, of which he never suspected that they would make the least

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possible use. But if Mr. Coleridge is satisfied with the wandering Moods of his Mind, perhaps this is no reason that others may not reap the solid benefit. He himself is like the idle sea-weed on the ocean, tossed from shore to shore: they are like barnacles fastened to the vessel of state, rotting its goodly timbers!

There are some persons who are of too fastidious a turn of mind to like any thing long, or to assent twice to the same opinion. — always sets himself to prop the falling cause, to nurse the ricketty bantling. He takes the part which he thinks in most need of his support, not so much out of magnanimity, as to prevent too great a degree of presumption or self-complacency on the triumphant side. ‘Though truth be truth, yet he contrives to throw such changes of vexation on it as it may lose some colour.’ I have been delighted to hear him expatiate with the most natural and affecting simplicity on a favourite passage or picture, and all the while afraid of agreeing with him, lest he should instantly turn round and unsay all that he had said, for fear of my going away with too good an opinion of my own taste, or too great an admiration of my idol—and his own. I dare not ask his opinion twice, if I have got a favourable sentence once, lest he should belie his own sentiments to stagger mine. I have heard him talk divinely (like one inspired) of Boccaccio, and the story of the Pot of Basil, describing ‘how it grew, and it grew, and it grew,’ till you saw it spread its tender leaves in the light of his eye, and wave in the tremulous sound of his voice; and yet if you asked him about it at another time, he would, perhaps, affect to think little of it, or to have forgotten the circumstance. His enthusiasm is fickle and treacherous. The instant he finds it shared in common, he backs out of it. His enmity is equally refined, but hardly so unsocial. His exquisitely turned invectives display all the beauty of scorn, and impart elegance to vulgarity. He sometimes finds out minute excellencies, and cries up one thing to put you out of conceit with another. If you want him to praise Sir Joshua *con amore*, in his best manner, you should begin with saying something about Titian—if you seem an idoliser of Sir Joshua, he will immediately turn off the discourse, gliding like the serpent before Eve, wary and beautiful, to the graces of Sir Peter Lely, or ask if you saw a Vandyke the other day, which he does not think Sir Joshua could stand near. But find fault with the Lake Poets, and mention some pretended patron of rising genius, and you need not fear but he will join in with you and go all lengths that you can wish him. You may calculate upon him there. ‘Pride elevates, and joy brightens his face.’ And, indeed, so eloquent is he, and so beautiful in his eloquence, that I myself, with all my freedom from gall and bitterness,

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could listen to him untired, and without knowing how the time went losing and neglecting many a meal and hour,

— ‘ From morn to noon,  
From noon to dewy eve, a summer's day ! ’

When I cease to hear him quite, other tongues, turned to what accents they may of praise or blame, will sound dull, ungrateful, out of tune, and harsh, in the comparison.

An overstrained enthusiasm produces a capriciousness in taste, as well as too much indifference. A person who sets no bounds to his admiration takes a surfeit of his favourites. He over-does the thing. He gets sick of his own everlasting praises, and affected raptures. His preferences are a great deal too violent to last. He wears out an author in a week, that might last him a year, or his life, by the eagerness with which he devours him. Every such favourite is in his turn the greatest writer in the world. Compared with the lord of the ascendant for the time being, Shakespear is commonplace, and Milton a pedant, a little insipid or so. Some of these prodigies require to be dragged out of their lurking-places, and cried up to the top of the compass ;—their traits are subtle, and must be violently obtruded on the sight. But the effort of exaggerated praise, though it may stagger others, tires the maker, and we hear of them no more after a while. Others take their turns, are swallowed whole, undigested, ravenously, and disappear in the same manner. Good authors share the fate of bad, and a library in a few years is nearly dismantled. It is a pity thus to outlive our admiration, and exhaust our relish of what is excellent. Actors and actresses are disposed of in the same conclusive peremptory way : some of them are talked of for months, nay, years ; then it is almost an offence to mention them. Friends, acquaintance, go the same road ;—are now asked to come six days in the week, then warned against coming the seventh. The smallest faults are soon magnified in those we think too highly of : but where shall we find perfection ? If we will put up with nothing short of that, we shall have neither pictures, books, nor friends left—we shall have nothing but our own absurdities to keep company with ! ‘ In all things a regular and moderate indulgence is the best security for a lasting enjoyment.’—BURKE.

There are numbers who judge by the event, and change with fortune. They extol the hero of the day, and join the prevailing clamour whatever it is ; so that the fluctuating state of public opinion regulates their feverish, restless enthusiasm, like a thermometer. They blow hot or cold, according as the wind sets favourably or otherwise. With such people the only infallible test of merit is



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success ; and no arguments are true that have not a large or powerful majority on their side. They go by appearances. Their vanity, not the truth, is their ruling object. They are not the last to quit a falling cause, and they are the first to hail the rising sun. Their minds want sincerity, modesty, and keeping. With them

—— ‘ To have done is to hang  
Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail  
In monumental mockery.’

They still, ‘ with one consent, praise new-born gauds,’ and Fame, as they construe it, is—

—— ‘ Like a fashionable host,  
That slightly shakes his parting guest by the hand :  
And with his arms outstretch’d, as he would fly,  
Grasps-in the comer. Welcome ever smiles,  
And Farewell goes out sighing.’

Such servile flatterers made an idol of Buonaparte while fortune smiled upon him, but when it left him, they removed him from his pedestal in the cabinet of their vanity, as we take down the picture of a relation that has died without naming us in his will. The opinion of such triflers is worth nothing : it is merely an echo. We do not want to be told the event of a question, but the rights of it. Truth is in their theory nothing but ‘ noise and inexplicable dumb show.’ They are the heralds, outriders, and trumpeters in the procession of fame ; are more loud and boisterous than the rest, and give themselves great airs, as the avowed patrons and admirers of genius and merit.

As there are many who change their sentiments with circumstances, (as they decided lawsuits in Rabelais with the dice), so there are others who change them with their acquaintance. ‘ Tell me your company, and I’ll tell you your opinions,’ might be said to many a man who piques himself on a select and superior view of things, distinct from the vulgar. Individuals of this class are quick and versatile, but they are not beforehand with opinion. They catch it, when it is pointed out to them, and take it at the rebound, instead of giving the first impulse. Their minds are a light, luxuriant soil, into which thoughts are easily transplanted, and shoot up with uncommon sprightliness and vigour. They wear the dress of other people’s minds very gracefully and unconsciously. They tell you your own opinion, or very gravely repeat an observation you have made to them about half a year afterwards. They let you into the delicacies and luxuries of Spenser with great disinterestedness, in return for your having introduced that author to their notice. They prefer West to Raphael, Stothard to Rubens, till they are told better. Still they

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are acute in the main, and good judges in their way. By trying to improve their taste, and reform their notions according to an ideal standard, they perhaps spoil and muddle their native faculties, rather than do them any good. Their first manner is their best, because it is the most natural. It is well not to go out of ourselves, and to be contented to take up with what we are, for better for worse. We can neither beg, borrow, nor steal characteristic excellences. Some views and modes of thinking suit certain minds, as certain colours suit certain complexions. We may part with very shining and very useful qualities without getting better ones to supply them. Mocking is catching, only in regard to defects. Mimicry is always dangerous.

It is not necessary to change our road in order to advance on our journey. We should cultivate the spot of ground we possess to the utmost of our power, though it may be circumscribed and comparatively barren. *A rolling stone gathers no moss.* People may collect all the wisdom they will ever attain, quite as well by staying at home as by travelling abroad. There is no use in shifting from place to place, from side to side, or from subject to subject. You have always to begin again, and never finish any course of study or observation. By adhering to the same principles you do not become stationary. You enlarge, correct, and consolidate your reasonings, without contradicting and shuffling about in your conclusions. If truth consisted in hasty assumptions and petulant contradictions, there might be some ground for this whiffing and violent inconsistency. But the face of truth, like that of nature, is different and the same. The first outline of an opinion, and the general tone of thinking, may be sound and correct, though we may spend any quantity of time and pains in working up and uniting the parts at subsequent sittings. If we have mistaken the character of the countenance altogether at first, no alterations will bring it right afterwards. Those who mistake white for black in the first instance, may as well mistake black for white when they reverse their canvass. I do not see what security they can have in their present opinions, who build their pretension to wisdom on the total folly, rashness, and extravagance (to say no worse) of their former ones. The perspective may change with years and experience: we may see certain things nearer, and others more remote; but the great masses and landmarks will remain, though thrown into shadow and tinged by the intervening atmosphere: so the laws of the understanding, the truth of nature, will remain, and cannot be thrown into utter confusion and perplexity by our blunders or caprice, like the objects in Hogarth's Rules of Perspective, where every thing is turned upside down, or thrust out of its well-known place. I cannot understand how our political Harlequins feel after

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all their summersaults and metamorphoses. They can hardly, I should think, look at themselves in the glass, or walk across the room without stumbling. This at least would be the case if they had the least reflection or self-knowledge. But they judge from pique and vanity solely. There should be a certain decorum in life as in a picture, without which it is neither useful nor agreeable. If my opinions are not right, at any rate they are the best I have been able to form, and better than any others I could take up at random, or out of perversity, now. Certainly opinions vitiate one another, and destroy the simplicity and clearness of the mind: nothing is good that has not a beginning, a middle, and an end; and I would wish my thoughts to be

‘ Linked each to each by natural piety ! ’

### ESSAY III

#### ON THE SPIRIT OF PARTISANSHIP

I HAVE in my time known few thorough partisans; at least on my own side of the question. I conceive, however, that the honestest and strongest-minded men have been so. In general, interest, fear, vanity, the love of contradiction, even a scrupulous regard to truth and justice, come to divert them from the popular cause. It is a character that requires very opposite and almost incompatible qualities—reason and prejudice, a passionate attachment founded on an abstract idea. He who can take up a speculative question, and pursue it with the same zeal and unshaken constancy that he does his immediate interests or private animosities, he who is as faithful to his principles as he is to himself, is the true partisan. I do not here speak of the bigot, or the mercenary or cowardly tool of a party. There are plenty of this description of persons (a considerable majority of the inhabitants of every country)—who are ‘ ever strong upon the stronger side,’ staunch, thorough-paced sticklers for their passions and prejudices, and who stand by their party as long as their party can stand by them. I speak of those who espouse a cause from liberal motives and with liberal views, and of the obstacles that are so often found to relax their perseverance or impair their zeal. These may, I think, be reduced chiefly to the heads of obligations to friends, of vanity, or the desire of the lead and distinction, to an over-squeamish delicacy in regard to appearances, to fickleness of purpose, or to natural timidity and weakness of nerve.

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There is nothing more contemptible than party-spirit in one point of view ; and yet it seems inseparable in practice from public principle. You cannot support measures unless you support men ;—you cannot carry any point or maintain any system, without acting in concert with others. In theory, it is all very well. We may refine in our distinctions, and elevate our language to what point we please. But in carrying the most sounding words and stateliest propositions into effect, we must make use of the instrumentality of men ; and some of the alloy and imperfection of the means may insinuate itself into the end. If we do not go all lengths with those who are embarked with us in the same views ; if we are not hearty in the defence of their interests and motives ; if we are not fully in their confidence and they in ours ; if we do not ingraft on the stock of public virtue the charities and sentiments of private affection and esteem ; if the bustle and anxiety and irritation of the state-affairs do not kindle into the glow of friendship as well as patriotism ; if we look distant, suspicious, lukewarm at one another ; if we criticise, carp at, pry into the conduct of our party with watchful, jealous eyes ; it is to be feared we shall play the game into the enemy's hands, and not co-operate together for the common good with all the steadiness and cordiality that might be wished. On the other hand, if we lend ourselves to the foibles and weaknesses of our friends ; if we suffer ourselves to be implicated in their intrigues, their scrambles and bargainings for place and power ; if we flatter their mistakes, and not only screen them from the eyes of others, but are blind to them ourselves ; if we compromise a great principle in the softness of a womanish friendship ; if we entangle ourselves in needless family-ties ; if we sell ourselves to the vices of a patron, or become the mouth-piece and echo of a *coterie* ; we shall be in that case slaves of a faction, not servants of the public, nor shall we long have a spark of the old Roman or the old English virtue left. Good-nature, conviviality, hospitality, habits of acquaintance and regard, favours received or conferred, spirit and eloquence to defend a friend when pressed hard upon, courtesy and good-breeding, are one thing—patriotism, firmness of principle, are another. The true patriot knows when to make each of these in turn give way to or control the other, in furtherance of the common good, just as the accomplished courtier makes all other interests, friendships, cabals, resentments, reconciliations, subservient to his attachment to the person of the king. He has the welfare of his country, the cause of mankind at heart, and makes that the scale in which all other motives are weighed as in a balance. With this inward prompter, he knows when to speak and when to hold his tongue, when to temporise, and when to throw away the scabbard,

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when to make men of service to principles, and when to make principles the sole condition of popularity,—nearly as well as if he had a title or a pension depending in reversion on his success: for it is true that ‘in their generation the children of this world are wiser than the children of light.’ In my opinion, Charles Fox had too much of what we mean by ‘the milk of human kindness’ to be a practical statesman, particularly in critical times, and with a cause of infinite magnitude at stake. He was too easy a friend, and too generous an enemy. He was willing to think better of those with whom he acted, or to whom he was opposed, than they deserved. He was the creature of temperament and sympathy, and suffered his feelings to be played upon, and to get the better of his principles, which were not of the most rigid kind—not ‘stuff o’ the conscience.’ With all the power of the crown, and all the strongholds of prejudice and venality opposed to him, ‘instead of a softness coming over the heart of a man,’ he should (in such a situation) have ‘turned to the stroke his adamantine scales that feared no discipline of human hands,’ and made it a struggle *ad internecionem* on the one side, as it was on the other. There was no place for moderation, much less for huckstering and trimming. Mr. Burke saw the thing right enough. It was a question about a principle—about the existence or extinction of human rights in the abstract. He was on the side of legitimate slavery; Mr. Fox on that of natural liberty. That was no reason he should be less bold or jealous in her defence, because he had every thing to contend against. But he made too many coalitions, too many compromises with flattery, with friendship, (to say nothing of the baits of power) not to falter and be defeated at last in the noble stand he had made for the principles of freedom.

Another sort are as much too captious and precise, as these are lax and *cullible* in their notions of political warfare. Their fault is an overweening egotism, as that of the former was too great a facility of temper. They will have every thing their own way to the minutest tittle, or they cannot think of giving it their sanction and support. The cause must come to them, they will not go to the cause. They stand upon their punctilio. They have a character at stake, which is dearer to them than the whole world. They have an idea of perfect truth and beauty in their own minds, the contemplation of which is a never-failing source of delight and consolation to them,

‘Though sun and moon were in the flat sea sunk,’

and which they will not soil by mixing it up with the infirmities of any cause or any party. They will not, ‘to do a great right, do a little wrong.’ They will let the lofty pillar inscribed to human liberty

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fall to the ground sooner than extend a finger to save it, on account of the dust and cobwebs that cling to it. It is not this great and mighty object they are thinking of all the time, but their own fantastic reputation and puny pretensions. While the world is tumbling about our ears, and the last hold of liberty, the ark containing our birth-right, the only possible barrier against bare-faced tyranny, is tottering—instead of setting the engines and the mortal instruments at work to prop it, and fighting in the trenches to the last drop, they are washing their hands of all imaginary imperfections, and looking in the glass of their own vanity, with an air of heightened self-complacency. Alas ! they do not foresee the fatal consequences ; they have an eye only to themselves. While all the power, the prejudice, and ignorance of mankind are drawn up in deadly array against the advance of truth and justice, they owe it to themselves, forsooth ! to state the naked merits of the question (heat and passion apart) and pick out all the faults of which their own party has been guilty, to fling as a make-weight into the adversary's scale of unmeasured abuse and execration. They will not take their ready stand by the side of him who was ' the very arm and burgonet of man,' and like a demi-Atlas, could alone prop a declining world, because for themselves they have some objections to the individual instrument, and they think principles more important than persons. No, they think persons of more consequence than principles, and themselves most of all. They injure the principle, through the person most able to protect it. They betray the cause by not defending it as it is attacked, tooth and nail, might and main, without exception and without remorse. When every thing is at stake, dear and valuable to man, as man ; when there is but the one dreadful alternative of entire loss, or final recovery of truth and freedom, it is no time to stand upon trifles and moot-points ; that great object is to be secured first, and at all hazards.

' Entire affection scorneth nicer hands.'

But there is a third thing in their minds, a fanciful something which they prefer to both contending parties. It may be so ; but neither they nor we can get it. We must have one of the two things imposed upon us, not by choice but by hard necessity. ' Our bane and antidote are both before us : ' and if we do anything to neglect the one, we justly incur the heavy, intolerable, unredeemed penalty of the other. If our pride is stung, if we have received a blow or the lie in our own persons, we know well enough what to do : our blood is up, we have an actual feeling and object to satisfy ; and we are not to be diverted from our purpose by sophistry or mere words. The

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quarrel is personal to ourselves ; and we feel the whole stress of it, rousing every faculty and straining every nerve. But if the quarrel is general to mankind ; if it is one in which the rights, freedom, hopes, and happiness of the whole world are embarked ; if we see the dignity of our common nature prostrate, trampled upon and mangled before the brute image of power, this gives us little concern ; our reason may disapprove, but our passions, our prejudices, are not touched ; and therefore our reason, our humanity, our abstract love of right (not 'screwed to the sticking-place' by some paltry interest of our own) are easily satisfied with any hollow professions of good-will, or put off with vague excuses, or staggered with open defiance. We are here, where a principle only is in danger, at leisure to calculate consequences, prudently for ourselves, or favourably for others : were it a point of honour (we think the honour of human nature is not our honour, that its disgrace is not our disgrace—we are not the *rabble* !) we should throw consideration and compassion to the dogs, and cry —'Away to Heaven respective lenity, and fire-eyed fury be my conduct now !' But charity is cold. We are the dupes of the flatteries of our opponents, because we are indifferent to our own object : we stand in awe of their threats, because in the absence of passion we are tender of our persons. They beat us in courage and in intellect, because we have nothing but the common good to sharpen our faculties or goad our will ; they have no less an alternative in view than to be uncontrolled masters of mankind, or to be hurled from high,—

' To grinning scorn a sacrifice,  
And endless infamy ! '

They do not celebrate the triumphs of their enemies as their own : it is with them a more feeling disputation. They never give an inch of ground that they can keep ; they keep all that they can get ; they make no concessions that can redound to their own discredit ; they assume all that makes for them ; if they pause, it is to gain time ; if they offer terms, it is to break them : they keep no faith with enemies : if you relax in your exertions, they persevere the more : if you make new efforts, they redouble theirs. While they give no quarter, you stand upon more ceremony. While they are cutting your throat, or putting the gag in your mouth, you talk of nothing but liberality, freedom of inquiry, and *douce humanité*. Their object is to destroy you, your object is to spare them—to treat them according to your own fancied dignity. They have sense and spirit enough to take all advantages that will further their cause : you have pedantry and pusillanimity enough to undertake the defence of yours, in order to defeat it. It is the difference between the efficient and the inefficient ;

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and this again resolves itself into the difference between a speculative proposition and a practical interest.

One thing that makes tyrants bold is, that they have the power to justify their wrong. They lay their hands upon the sword, and ask who will dispute their commands. The friends of humanity and justice have not in general this ark of confidence to recur to, and can only appeal to reason and propriety. They oppose power on the plea of right and conscience; and shall they, in pursuance of their claims, violate in the smallest tittle what is due to truth and justice? So that the one have no law but their wills, and the absolute extent of their authority, in attaining or securing their ends, because they make no pretensions to scrupulous delicacy: the others are cooped and cabined in, by all sorts of nice investigations in philosophy, and misgivings of the moral sense; that is, are deprived or curtailed of the means of succeeding in their ends, because those ends are not bare-faced violence and wrong. It might as well be said that a man has a right to knock me on the head on the highway, and that I am only to use mildness and persuasion in return, as best suited to the justice of my cause; as that I am not to retaliate and make reprisals on the common enemies of mankind in their own style and mode of execution. Is not a man to defend his liberty, or the liberties of his fellow-men, as strenuously and remorselessly as he would his life or his purse? Men are Quakers in political principle, Turks and Jews in private conscience.

The whole is an error, arising from confounding the distinction between theory and practice, between the still-life of letters and the tug and onset of contending factions. I might recommend to our political mediators the advice which Henry v. addressed to his soldiers on a critical occasion.

' In peace there's nothing so becomes a man  
As modest stillness and humility;  
But when the blast of war blows in our ears  
Then imitate the action of the tiger;  
Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,  
Disguise fair nature with hard-favour'd rage;  
Then lend the eye a terrible aspect;  
Let it pry through the portage of the head,  
Like the brass-cannon: let the brow o'erwhelm it  
As fearfully as doth a galled rock  
O'erhang and jutty his confounded base,  
Swill'd with the wild and wasteful ocean:  
Now set the teeth, and stretch the nostril wide;  
Hold hard the breath, and bend up every spirit  
To his full height.'

So, in speculation, refine as much as you please, intellectually and



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morally speaking, and you may do it with advantage. Reason is then the instrument you use, and you cannot raise the standard of perfection you fix upon and propose to others too high, or proceed with too much candour and moderation in the advancement of truth : but in practice, you have not your choice of ends or means. You have two things to decide between, the extreme, probably, of an evil and a considerable good, and if you will not make your mind up to take the best of the two with all its disadvantages and draw-backs you must be contented to take the worst : for as you cannot alter the state of the conflicting parties who are carrying their point by force, or dictate what is best by speaking a word ; so by finding fault with the attainable good, and throwing cold water on it, you add fuel to your enemy's courage and assist his success. ' Those who are not for us are against us.' You create a diversion in his favour, by distracting and enervating men's minds, as much as by questioning the general's orders, or drawing off a strong detachment in the heat of a battle. Political, is like military warfare. There are but two sides, and after you have once chosen your party, it will not do to stand in the midway, and say you like neither. There is no other to like, in the eye of common sense, or in the practical and inevitable result of the thing. As active partisans, we must take up with the best we can get in the circumstances, and defend it with all our might against a worse cause (which will prevail, if this does not) instead of ' letting our frail thoughts dally with faint surmise ' ;—or, while dreaming of an ideal perfection, we shall find ourselves surprised into the train, and gracing the triumph, of the common enemy. It is sufficient if our objects and principles are sound and disinterested. If we were engaged in a friendly contest, where integrity and fair dealing were the order of the day, our means might be as unimpeachable as our ends ; but in a struggle with the passions, interests, and prejudices of men, right reason, pure intention, are hardly competent to carry us through : we want another stimulus. The vices may be opposed to each other sometimes with advantage and propriety. A little of the alloy of human frailty may be allowed to lend its aid to the service of humanity ; and if we have only so much obstinacy or insensibility as enables us to persevere in the path of public duty with more determination and effect, both our motives and conduct will be above the ordinary standard of political morality. To suppose that we can do much more than this, or that we can set up our individual opinion of what is best in itself, or of the best means of attaining it, and be listened to by the world at large, is egregiously to overrate their docility or our own powers of persuasion.

It is the same want of a centripetal force, of a ruling passion, of a

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moral instinct of union and co-operation for a general purpose, that makes men fly off into knots and factions, and each set up for the leader of a party himself. Where there is a strong feeling of interest at work, it reconciles and combines the most discordant materials, and fits them to their place in the social machine. But in the conduct and support of the public good, we see 'nothing but vanity, chaotic vanity.' There is no forbearance, no self-denial, no magnanimity of proceeding. Every one is seeking his own aggrandisement, or to supplant his neighbour, instead of advancing the popular cause. It is because they have no real regard for it but as it serves as a stalking-horse to their ambition, restless inquietude, or love of cabal. They abuse and vilify their own party, just as they do the Ministers.

'Each lolls his tongue out at the other,  
And shakes his empty noddle at his brother.'

John Bull does not aim so maliciously, or hit so hard at Whigs and Reformers, as Cobbett. The reason is, that a very large proportion of these Marplots and regenerators of the world are actuated by no love of their species or zeal for a general question, but by envy, malice, and all uncharitableness. They are discontented with themselves and with every thing about them. They object to, they dissent from every measure. Nothing pleases their fastidious tastes. For want of something to exercise their illhumour and troublesome officiousness upon, they abuse the Government:—when they are baulked or tired of this they fall foul of one another. The slightest slip or difference of opinion is never forgiven, but gives birth to a deadly feud. Touch but their petty self-importance, and out comes a flaming denunciation of their own cabal, and all they know about the individuals composing it. This is not patriotism, but spleen—a want of something to do and to talk about—of sense, honesty, and feeling. To wreak their spite on an individual, they will ruin the cause, and serve up the friend and idol of the people sliced and carbonadoed, a delicious morsel to the other side. There is a strange want of keeping in this. They are true neither to themselves nor to their principles. The Reformers are in general, it must be confessed, an ill-conditioned set; and they should be told of this infirmity that most easily besets them. When they find their gall and bitterness overflowing on the very persons who take the lead, and deservedly take the lead, in their affairs, for some slight flaw or misunderstanding, they should be taught to hold their tongues, or be drummed out of the regiment as spies and informers.

Trimming, and want of spirit to declare the honest truth, arise in part from the same source. When a man is not thoroughly

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convinced of an opinion, or where he does not feel a deep interest in it, he does not like to make himself obnoxious by avowing it ; is willing to make all the allowance he can for difference of sentiment, and consults his own safety by retiring from a sinking cause. This is the very time when the genuine partisan, who has a rooted attachment to a principle, and feels it as a part of himself, finds himself most called upon to come forward in its support. His anxiety for truth and justice leaves him in no fear for himself, and the sincerity of his motives makes him regardless of censure or obloquy. His profession of hearty devotion to freedom was not an ebullition called forth by the sunshine of prosperity, a lure for popularity and public favour ; and when these desert it, he still maintains his post with his integrity. There is a natural timidity of mind, also, which can never go the whole length of any opinion, but is always interlarding its qualified assent with unmeaning *but*s and *if*s ; as there is a levity and discursiveness of imagination which cannot settle finally in any belief, and requires a succession of glancing views, topics, and opposite conclusions, to satisfy its appetite for intellectual variety. I have known persons leave the cause of independence and freedom, not because they found it unprofitable, but because they found it flat and stale for want of novelty. At the same time, interest is a great stimulator ; and perhaps the success of their early principles might have reconciled them to their embarrassing monotony. Few persons have strength and simplicity of mind (without some additional inducement) to be always harping on the same string, or to put up with the legitimate variety to be found in an abstract principle, applicable to all emergencies. They like changeable silks better than lasting homespun. A sensible man once mentioned to me his having called on — that morning, who entertained him with a *tirade* against the Bourbons for two hours ; but he said he did not at all feel convinced that he might not have been writing Ultra-royalist paragraphs for the —, just before he came, in their favour, and only shifted his side of the argument, as a man who is tired of lying too long on one side of his body is glad to turn to the other. There was much shrewdness, and equal probability in this conjecture.

I think the spirit of partisanship is of use in a point of view that has not been distinctly adverted to. It serves as a conductor to carry off our antipathies and ill-blood in a quarter and a manner that is least hurtful to the general weal. A thorough partisan is a good hater ; but he hates only one side of a question, and that the *outside*. His bigotry throws human nature into strong light and shade ; he has his sympathies as well as his antipathies ; it is not all black or a dull

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drab-colour. He does not generalise in his contempt or disgust, or proceed from individuals to universals. He lays the faults and vices of mankind to the account of sects and parties, creeds and classes. Man in himself is a good sort of animal. It is the being a Tory or a Whig (as it may happen) that makes a man a knave or fool; but then we hardly look upon him as of the same species with ourselves. Kings are not arbitrary, nor priests hypocritical, because they are men, but because they are kings and priests. We form certain nominal abstractions of these classes, which the more we dislike them, the less natural do they seem, and leave the general character of the species untouched, or act as a foil to it. There is nothing that is a greater damper to party spirit than to suggest that the errors and enormities of both sides arise from certain inherent dispositions, common to the species. It shocks the liberal and enlightened among us, to suppose that under any circumstances they could become bigots, tools, persecutors. They wipe their hands clean of all such aspersions. There is a great gulph of prejudice and passion placed between us and our opponents; and this is interpreted into a natural barrier and separation of sentiment and feeling. 'Our withers are unwrung.' Burke represented modern revolutionists to himself, under the equivocal similitude of 'green-eyed, spring-nailed, velvet-pawed philosophers, whether going on two legs or on four'; and thus removed to a distance from his own person all the ill attributes with which he had complimented the thorough-bred metaphysician. By comparing the plausible qualities of a Minister of state to the sleekness of the panther, I myself seem to have no more affinity with that whole genus, than with the whiskers and claws of that formidable and spirited animal. Bishop Taylor used to reprimand his rising pride by saying, at the sight of a reprobate, 'There goes my wicked self;' we do not apply the same method politically, and say, 'There goes my Tory or my Jacobin self.' We suppose the two things incompatible. The Calvinist damns the Arminian, the Protestant the Papist, &c. but it is not for a difference of nature, but an opposition of opinion. The spirit of partisanship is not a spirit of our misanthropy. But for the vices and errors of example and institution, mankind are (on this principle) only a little lower than the angels: it is false doctrine and absurd prejudices that make demons of them. The only original sin is differing in opinion with us: of that they are curable like any occasional disorder, and the man comes out, from beneath the husk of his party and prejudices, pure and immaculate. Make proselytes of them, let them come over to our way of thinking, and they are a different race of beings quite. This is to be effected by the force of argument and the progress of knowledge.

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It is well, it is perfectly well. We cast the slough of our vices with the shibboleth of our party; a Reform in Parliament would banish all knavery and folly from the land. It is not the same wretched little mischievous animal, man, that is alike under all denominations and all systems, and in whom different situations and notions only bring out different inherent, incorrigible vices and propensities; but the professions and the theory being changed for the one, which we think the only true and infallible one, the whole world, by the mere removal of our arbitrary prejudices and modes of thinking, would become as sincere, as benevolent, as independent, and as worthy people as we are! To hate and proscribe half the species under various pretexts and nicknames, seems, therefore, the only way to entertain a good opinion of ourselves and mankind in general.

### ESSAY IV

#### ON NICKNAMES

‘*Hæ nugæ in seria ducunt.*’

THIS is a more important subject than it seems at first sight. It is as serious in its results as it is contemptible in the means by which those results are brought about. Nicknames for the most part govern the world. The history of politics, of religion, of literature, of morals, and of private life, is too often little less than the history of nicknames. What are half the convulsions of the civilised world, the frequent overthrow of states and kingdoms, the shock and hostile encounter of mighty continents, the battles by sea and land, the intestine commotions, the feuds of the Vitelli and Orsini, of the Guelphs and Gibellines, the civil wars in England, and the League in France, the jealousies and heart-burnings of cabinets and councils, the uncharitable proscriptions of creeds and sects, Turk, Jew, Pagan, Papist and Puritan, Quaker and Methodist,—the persecutions and massacres, the burnings, tortures, imprisonments, and lingering deaths inflicted for a different profession of faith,—but so many illustrations of the power of this principle? Fox’s *Book of Martyrs*, and Neale’s *History of the Puritans*, are comments on the same text. The fires in Smithfield were fanned by nicknames, and a nickname set its seal on the unopened dungeons of the Holy Inquisition. Nicknames are the talismans and spells that collect and set in motion all the combustible part of men’s passions and prejudices, which have hitherto played so much more successful a game, and done their work so much more

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effectually than reason, in all the grand concerns and petty details of human life, and do not yet seem tired of the task assigned them. Nicknames are the convenient portable tools by which they simplify the process of mischief, and get through their job with the least time and trouble. These worthless, unmeaning, irritating, envenomed words of reproach are the established signs by which the different compartments of society are ticketed, labelled, and marked out for each other's hatred and contempt. They are to be had, ready cut and dry, of all sorts and sizes, wholesale and retail, for foreign exportation or home consumption, and for all occasions in life. 'The priest calls the lawyer a cheat, the lawyer beknaves the divine.' The Frenchman hates the Englishman because he is an Englishman, and the Englishman hates the Frenchman for as good a reason. The Whig hates the Tory, and the Tory the Whig. The Dissenter hates the Church-of-England-man, and the Church-of-England-man hates the Dissenter, as if they were of a different species, because they have a different designation. The Mussulman calls the worshipper of the Cross 'Christian dog,' spits in his face, and kicks him from the pavement, by virtue of a nickname; and the Papist retorts the indignity upon the Infidel and the Jew by the same infallible rule of right. In France, they damn Shakespear in the lump, by calling him a *barbare*; and we talk of Racine's *verbiage* with inexpressible contempt and self-complacency. Among ourselves, an anti-Jacobin critic denounces a Jacobin poet and his friends, at a venture, 'as infidels and fugitives, who have left their wives destitute, and their children fatherless'—whether they have wives and children or not. The unenlightened savage makes a meal of his enemy's flesh, after reproaching him with the name of his tribe, because he is differently tattooed; and the literary cannibal cuts up the character of his opponent by the help of a nickname. The jest of all this is, that a party nickname is always a relative term, and has its counter-sign, which has just the same force and meaning, so that both must be perfectly ridiculous and insignificant. A Whig implies a Tory; there must be 'Malcontents' as well as 'Malignants'; Jacobins and anti-Jacobins; French and English. These sort of *noms des guerres* derive all their force from their contraries. Take away the meaning of the one, and you take the sting out of the other. They could not exist but upon the strength of mutual and irreconcilable antipathies; there must be no love lost between them. What is there in the names themselves to give them a preference over each other? 'Sound them, they do become the mouth as well; weigh them, they are as heavy; conjure with them, one will raise a spirit as soon as the other.' If there were not fools and madmen who hated both,

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there could not be fools and madmen bigotted to either. I have heard an eminent character boast that he had done more to produce the late war by nicknaming Buonaparte 'the Corsican,' than all the state-papers and documents on the subject put together. And yet Mr. Southey asks triumphantly, 'Is it to be supposed that it is England, *our* England, to whom that war was owing?' As if, in a dispute between two countries, the conclusive argument which lies in the pronoun *our*, belonged only to one of them. I like Shakespear's version of the matter better :

'Hath Britain all the sun that shines? day, night,  
Are they not but in Britain? I' th' world's volume  
*Our* Britain seems as of it, but not in it;  
In a great pool a swan's nest. Prithee think  
There 's livers out of Britain.'

In all national disputes, it is common to appeal to the numbers on your side as decisive on the point. If every body in England thought the late war right, every body in France thought it wrong. There were ten millions on one side of the question, (or rather of the water), and thirty millions on the other side. That's all. I remember some one arguing, in justification of our ministers interfering on that occasion, 'That governments would not go to war for nothing;' to which I answered, 'Then they could not go to war at all, for, at that rate, neither of them could be in the wrong, and yet both of them must be in the right, which was absurd. The only meaning of these vulgar nicknames and party-distinctions, where they are urged most violently and confidently, is, that others differ from you in some particular or other, (whether it be opinion, dress, clime, complexion), which you highly disapprove of, forgetting, that, by the same rule, they have the very same right to be offended at you because you differ from them. Those who have reason on their side do not make the most obstinate and furious appeals to prejudice and abusive language. I know but of one exception to this general rule, and that is, where the things that excite disgust are of such a kind that they cannot well be gone into without offence to decency and good manners; but it is equally certain in this case, that those who are most shocked at the things are not those who are most forward to apply the names. A person will not be fond of repeating a charge, or adverting to a subject, that inflicts a wound on his own feelings, even for the sake of wounding the feelings of another. A man should be very sure that he himself is not what he has always in his mouth. The greatest prudes have been often accounted the greatest hypocrites, and a satirist is at best but a suspicious character. The loudest and most unblushing invectives against vice and debauchery will as often proceed from

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a desire to inflame and pamper the passions of the writer, by raking into a nauseous subject, as from a wish to excite virtuous indignation against it in the public mind, or to reform the individual. To familiarise the mind to gross ideas is not the way to increase your own or the general repugnance to them. But, to return to the subject of nicknames.

The use of this figure of speech is, that it excites a strong idea without requiring any proof. It is a shorthand compendious mode of getting a conclusion, and never troubling yourself or any body else with the formalities of reasoning or the dictates of common sense. It is superior to all evidence, for it does not rest upon any, and operates with the greatest force and certainty in proportion to the utter want of probability. Belief is only a strong impression, and the malignity or extravagance of the accusation passes for a proof of the crime. 'Brevity is the soul of wit;' and of all eloquence a nickname is the most concise, and of all arguments the most unanswerable. It gives *carte blanche* to the imagination, throws the reins on the neck of the passions, and suspends the use of the understanding altogether. It does not stand upon ceremony, on the nice distinctions of right and wrong. It does not wait the slow processes of reason, or stop to unravel the web of sophistry. It takes every thing for granted that serves for nourishment for the spleen. It is instantaneous in its operations. There is nothing to interpose between the effect and it. It is passion without proof, and action without thought,—'the unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations.' It does not, as Mr. Burke expresses it, 'leave the will puzzled, undecided, and sceptical in the moment of action.' It is a word and a blow.

'Bring but a Scotsman frae his hill,  
Clap in his cheek a Highland gill,  
Say such is royal George's will,  
And there 's the foe,  
He has nae thought but how to kill  
Twa at a blow.'

The 'No Popery' cry, raised a little while ago, let loose all the lurking spite and prejudice which had lain rankling in the proper receptacles for them for above a century, without any knowledge of the past history of the country which had given rise to them, or any reference to their connection with present circumstances; for the knowledge of the one would have prevented the possibility of their application to the other. Facts present a tangible and definite idea to the mind, a train of causes and consequences, accounting for each other, and leading to a positive conclusion—but no farther. But a nickname is tied down to no such limited service; it is a disposable force, that is almost always perverted to mischief. It clothes itself



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with all the terrors of uncertain abstractions, and there is no end of the abuse to which it is liable but the cunning of those who employ, or the credulity of those who are gulled by it. It is a reserve of the ignorance, bigotry, and intolerance of weak and vulgar minds, brought up where reason fails, and always ready, at a moment's warning, to be applied to any, the most absurd purposes. If you bring specific charges against a man, you thereby enable him to meet and repel them, if he thinks it worth his while; but a nickname baffles reply, by the very vagueness of the inferences from it, and gives increased activity to the confused, dim, and imperfect notions of dislike connected with it, from their having no settled ground to rest upon. The mind naturally irritates itself against an unknown object of fear or jealousy, and makes up for the blindness of its zeal by an excess of it. We are eager to indulge our hasty feelings to the utmost, lest, by stopping to examine, we should find that there is no excuse for them. The very consciousness of the injustice we may be doing another makes us only the more loud and bitter in our invectives against him. We keep down the admonitions of returning reason, by calling up a double portion of gratuitous and vulgar spite. The will may be said to act with most force *in vacuo*; the passions are the most ungovernable when they are blindfolded. That malignity is always the most implacable which is accompanied with a sense of weakness, because it is never satisfied of its own success or safety. A nickname carries the weight of the pride, the indolence, the cowardice, the ignorance, and the ill-nature of mankind on its side. It acts, by mechanical sympathy, on the nerves of society. Any one who is without character himself may make himself master of the reputation of another by the application of a nickname, as, if you do not mind soiling your fingers, you may always throw dirt on another. No matter how undeserved the imputation, it will stick; for, though it is sport to the bye-standers to see you bespattered, they will not stop to see you wipe out the stains. You are not heard in your own defence; it has no effect, it does not tell, excites no sensation, or it is only felt as a disappointment of their triumph over you. Their passions and prejudices are inflamed by the charge, 'as rage with rage doth sympathise;' by vindicating yourself, you merely bring them back to common-sense, which is a very sober, mawkish state. *Give a dog a bad name, and hang him*, is a proverb. 'A nickname is the heaviest stone that the devil can throw at a man.' It is a bugbear to the imagination, and, though we do not believe it, it still haunts our apprehensions. Let a nickname be industriously applied to our dearest friend, and let us know that it is ever so false and malicious, yet it will answer its end; it connects the person's name and idea with an

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ugly association, you think of them with pain together, or it requires an effort of indignation or magnanimity on your part to disconnect them; it becomes an uneasy subject, a sore point, and you will sooner desert your friend, or join in the conspiracy against him, than be constantly forced to repel charges without truth or meaning, and have your penetration or character called in question by a rascal. Nay, such is the unaccountable construction of language and of the human mind, that the affixing the most innocent or praise-worthy appellation to any individual or set of individuals, *as a nickname*, has all the effect of the most opprobrious epithets. Thus the cant name 'The Talents,' was successfully applied as a stigma to the Whigs at one time; it held them up to ridicule, and made them obnoxious to public feeling, though it was notorious to every body that the Whig leaders were 'the Talents,' and that their adversaries nicknamed them so from real hatred and pretended derision. 'The Party' is now substituted for 'the Talents,' since success has given their own set the monstrous affectation of being men of talents; and the poor Morning Chronicle is persecuted daily as the Party as it formerly stood the brunt (innocently enough) of all the abuse and sarcasms that were showered on the Talents. Call a man short by his Christian name, as Tom or Dick such a one, or by his profession, (however respectable), as Canning pelted a noble lord with his left-off title of Doctor,—and you undo him for ever, if he has a reputation to lose. Such is the tenaciousness of spite and ill-nature, or the jealousy of public opinion, even this will be peg enough to hang doubtful innuendos, weighty dilemmas upon. 'With so small a web as this will I catch so great a fly as Cassio.' The public do not like to see their favourites treated with impertinent familiarity—it lowers the tone of admiration very speedily. It implies that some one stands in no great awe of their idol, and he perhaps may know as much about the matter as they do. It seems as if a man whose name, with some contemptuous abbreviation, is always dinned in the public ear, was distinguished by nothing else. By repeating a man's name in this manner you may soon make him sick of it, and of his life too. Mr. Southey has by this time, I should suppose, a tolerable surfeit of his title of Laureate! Children do not like to be *called out of their names*. It is questioning their personal identity. A writer, who has made his vocabulary rich in nicknames, (the late Editor of the Times,) thought he had made a great acquisition to his stock, when it was pretended at one time that Bonaparte's real name was not Napoleon but Nicholas. He congratulated himself on this discovery, as a standing jest and a lasting triumph. Yet there was nothing in the name to signify. Nicholas Poussin was an instance of a great

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man in the last age, and in our own times, have we not Nicholas Vansittart? The same writer has the merit of having carried this figure of speech as far as it would go. He fairly worried his readers into conviction by abuse and nicknames. People surrendered their judgments to escape the persecution of his style, and the disgust and indignation which his incessant violence and vulgarity excited, at last made you hate those who were the objects of it. *Causa causæ causa causati*. He made people sick of a subject by making them sick of his arguments. Yet he attributed the effect he produced to the eloquence of his phraseology and the force of his reasonings!

A parrot may be taught to call names; and if the person who keeps the parrot has a spite to his neighbours, he may give them a great deal of annoyance without much wit, either in the employer or the puppet. The insignificance of the instrument has nothing to do with the efficacy of the means. Hotspur would have had 'a *starling* taught to repeat nothing but Mortimer,' in the ears of his enemy. Nature, it is said, has given arms to all creatures the most proper to defend themselves, and annoy others: to the lowest she has given the use of nicknames.

There are some droll instances of the effect of proper names combined with circumstances. A young student had come up to London from Cambridge, and went in the evening and planted himself in the pit of the playhouse. He had not been seated long when, in one of the front boxes near him, he discovered one of his college tutors, with whom he felt an immediate and strong desire to claim acquaintance, and called out in a low and respectful voice, 'Dr. Topping!' The appeal was, however, ineffectual. He then repeated in a louder tone, but still in an under key, so as not to excite the attention of any one but his friend, 'Dr. Topping!' The Doctor took no notice. He then grew more impatient, and repeated 'Dr. Topping, Dr. Topping!' two or three times pretty loud, to see whether the Doctor did not or would not hear him. Still the Doctor remained immovable. The joke began at length to get round, and one or two persons, as he continued his invocations of the Doctor's name, joined with him in them; these were reinforced by others calling out, 'Dr. Topping! Dr. Topping!' on all sides, so that he could no longer avoid perceiving it, and at length the whole pit rose and roared, 'Dr. Topping!' with loud and repeated cries, and the Doctor was forced to retire precipitately, frightened at the sound of his own name. There is sometimes an inconvenience in common as well as uncommon names. On the night that Garrick took his leave of the stage, an inveterate playgoer could not get a seat in any part of the house. At length he went up into the gallery, but found that equally full with the rest. In this extremity a thought struck him, and he called out as loud as

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he could, 'Mr. Smith, you 're wanted. Your wife 's taken suddenly ill, and you must go home immediately.' In an instant, half a dozen persons started up from different parts of the gallery to go out, and the gentleman took possession of the first place that offered. No doubt these persons would be disposed to quarrel with their names and their wives for some time after.

The calling people by their Christian or surnames is a proof of affection, as well as of hatred. They are generally the best good fellows with whom their friends take this sort of liberty. *Diminutives* are titles of endearment. Dr. Johnson's calling Goldsmith 'Goldy' did equal honour to both. It shewed the regard he had for him. This familiarity may perhaps imply a certain want of formal respect; but formal respect is not necessary to, if it is consistent with, cordial friendship. Titles of honour are the reverse of nicknames,—they convey the idea of respect as the others do of contempt, and equally mean little or nothing. Junius's motto, *Stat nominis umbra*, is a very significant one, it might be extended farther. A striking instance of the force of names, standing by themselves, is in the respect felt towards Michael Angelo in this country. We know nothing of him but his name. It is an abstraction of fame and greatness. Our admiration of him supports itself, and our idea of his superiority seems self-evident, because it is attached to his name only. Some of our artists seem trying to puff their names into reputation from an instinctive knowledge of this principle,—by talking incessantly of themselves and doing nothing. It is not, indeed, easy to deny the merit of the works—which they do *not* produce. Those which they have produced are very bad.

### ESSAY V

#### ON FASHION

'Born of nothing, begot of nothing.'

'His garment neither was of silk nor say,  
But painted plumes in goodly order dight,  
Like as the sun-burnt Indians do array  
Their tawny bodies in their proudest plight :  
As those same plumes, so seem'd he vain and light,  
That by his gait might easily appear ;  
For still he far'd as dancing in delight,  
And in his hands a windy fan did bear,  
That in the idle air he mov'd still here and there.'

FASHION is an odd jumble of contradictions, of sympathies and antipathies. It exists only by its being participated among a certain

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number of persons, and its essence is destroyed by being communicated to a greater number. It is a continual struggle between 'the great vulgar and the small' to get the start of or keep up with each other in the race of appearances, by an adoption on the part of the one of such external and fantastic symbols as strike the attention and excite the envy or admiration of the beholder, and which are no sooner made known and exposed to public view for this purpose, than they are successfully copied by the multitude, the slavish herd of imitators, who do not wish to be behind-hand with their betters in outward show and pretensions, and which then sink, without any farther notice, into disrepute and contempt. Thus fashion lives only in a perpetual round of giddy innovation and restless vanity. To be old-fashioned is the greatest crime a coat or a hat can be guilty of. To look like nobody else is a sufficiently mortifying reflection; to be in danger of being mistaken for one of the rabble is worse. Fashion constantly begins and ends in the two things it abhors most, singularity and vulgarity. It is the perpetual setting up and disowning a certain standard of taste, elegance, and refinement, which has no other foundation or authority than that it is the prevailing distinction of the moment, which was yesterday ridiculous from its being new, and to-morrow will be odious from its being common. It is one of the most slight and insignificant of all things. It cannot be lasting, for it depends on the constant change and shifting of its own harlequin disguises; it cannot be sterling, for, if it were, it could not depend on the breath of caprice; it must be superficial, to produce its immediate effect on the gaping crowd; and frivolous, to admit of its being assumed at pleasure by the numbers of those who affect, by being in the fashion, to be distinguished from the rest of the world. It is not any thing in itself, nor the sign of any thing but the folly and vanity of those who rely upon it as their greatest pride and ornament. It takes the firmest hold of the most flimsy and narrow minds, of those whose emptiness conceives of nothing excellent but what is thought so by others, and whose self-conceit makes them willing to confine the opinion of all excellence to themselves and those like them. That which is true or beautiful in itself, is not the less so for standing alone. That which is good for any thing, is the better for being more widely diffused. But fashion is the abortive issue of vain ostentation and exclusive egotism: it is haughty, trifling, affected, servile, despotic, mean, and ambitious, precise and fantastical, all in a breath—tied to no rule, and bound to conform to every whim of the minute. 'The fashion of an hour old mocks the wearer.' It is a sublimated essence of levity, caprice, vanity, extravagance, idleness, and selfishness. It thinks of nothing but not being contam-

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inated by vulgar use, and winds and doubles like a hare, and betakes itself to the most paltry shifts to avoid being overtaken by the common hunt that are always in full chase after it. It contrives to keep up its fastidious pretensions, not by the difficulty of the attainment, but by the rapidity and evanescent nature of the changes. It is a sort of conventional badge, or understood passport into select circles, which must still be varying (like the water-mark in bank-notes) not to be counterfeited by those without the pale of fashionable society; for to make the test of admission to all the privileges of that refined and volatile atmosphere depend on any real merit or extraordinary accomplishment, would exclude too many of the pert, the dull, the ignorant, too many shallow, upstart, and self-admiring pretenders, to enable the few that passed muster to keep one another in any tolerable countenance. If it were the fashion, for instance, to be distinguished for virtue, it would be difficult to set or follow the example; but then this would confine the pretension to a small number, (not the most fashionable part of the community), and would carry a very singular air with it. Or if excellence in any art or science were made the standard of fashion, this would also effectually prevent vulgar imitation, but then it would equally prevent fashionable impertinence. There would be an obscure circle of *virtù* as well as virtue, drawn within the established circle of fashion, a little province of a mighty empire;—the example of honesty would spread slowly, and learning would still have to boast of a respectable minority. But of what use would such uncourtly and out-of-the-way accomplishments be to the great and noble, the rich and the fair, without any of the *éclat*, the noise and nonsense which belong to that which is followed and admired by all the world alike? The real and solid will never do for the current coin, the common wear and tear of foppery and fashion. It must be the meretricious, the showy, the outwardly fine, and intrinsically worthless—that which lies within the reach of the most indolent affectation, that which can be put on or off at the suggestion of the most wilful caprice, and for which, through all its fluctuations, no mortal reason can be given, but that it is the newest absurdity in vogue! The shape of a head-dress, whether flat or piled (curl on curl) several stories high by the help of pins and pomatum, the size of a pair of paste buckles, the quantity of gold-lace on an embroidered waistcoat, the mode of taking a pinch of snuff, or of pulling out a pocket handkerchief, the lisping and affected pronunciation of certain words, the saying *Me'm* for *Madam*, Lord Foppington's *Tam* and *'Paun honour*, with a regular set of visiting phrases and insipid sentiments ready sorted for the day, were what formerly distinguished the mob of fine gentlemen and ladies from the

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mob of their inferiors. These marks and appendages of gentility had their day, and were then discarded for others equally peremptory and unequivocal. But in all this chopping and changing, it is generally one folly that drives out another; one trifle that by its specific levity acquires a momentary and surprising ascendancy over the last. There is no striking deformity of appearance or behaviour that has not been made 'the sign of an inward and invisible grace.' Accidental imperfections are laid hold of to hide real defects. Paint, patches, and powder, were at one time synonymous with health, cleanliness, and beauty. Obscenity, irreligion, small oaths, tippling, gaming, effeminacy in the one sex and Amazon airs in the other, any thing is the fashion while it lasts. In the reign of Charles II., the profession and practice of every species of extravagance and debauchery were looked upon as the indispensable marks of an accomplished cavalier. Since that period the court has reformed, and has had rather a rustic air. Our belles formerly overloaded themselves with dress: of late years, they have affected to go almost naked,—'and are, when unadorned, adorned the most.' The women having left off stays, the men have taken to wear them, if we are to believe the authentic Memoirs of the Fudge Family. The Niobe head is at present buried in the *poke* bonnet, and the French milliners and *marchands des modes* have proved themselves an overmatch for the Greek sculptors, in matters of taste and costume.

A very striking change has, however, taken place in dress of late years, and some progress has been made in taste and elegance, from the very circumstance, that, as fashion has extended its empire in that direction, it has lost its power. While fashion in dress included what was costly, it was confined to the wealthier classes: even this was an encroachment on the privileges of rank and birth, which for a long time were the only things that commanded or pretended to command respect, and we find Shakespear complaining that 'the city madam bears the cost of princes on unworthy shoulders'; but, when the appearing in the top of the mode no longer depended on the power of purchasing certain expensive articles of dress, or the right of wearing them, the rest was so obvious and easy, that any one who chose might cut as coxcombical a figure as the best. It became a matter of mere affectation on the one side, and gradually ceased to be made a matter of aristocratic assumption on the other. 'In the grand carnival of this our age,' among other changes this is not the least remarkable, that the monstrous pretensions to distinctions in dress have dwindled away by tacit consent, and the simplest and most graceful have been in the same request with all classes. In this respect, as well as some others, 'the age is grown so picked, the

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peasant's toe comes so near the courtier's heel, it galls his kibe; a lord is hardly to be distinguished in the street from an attorney's clerk; and a plume of feathers is no longer mistaken for the highest distinction in the land! The ideas of natural equality and the Manchester steam-engines together have, like a double battery, levelled the high towers and artificial structures of fashion in dress, and a white muslin gown is now the common costume of the mistress and the maid, instead of their wearing, as heretofore, rich silks and satins or coarse linsey-wolsey. It would be ridiculous (on a similar principle) for the courtier to take the wall of the citizen, without having a sword by his side to maintain his right of precedence; and, from the stricter notions that have prevailed of a man's personal merit and identity, a cane dangling from his arm is the greatest extension of his figure that can be allowed to the modern *petit-maitre*.

What shews the worthlessness of mere fashion is, to see how easily this vain and boasted distinction is assumed, when the restraints of decency or circumstances are once removed, by the most uninformed and commonest of the people. I know an undertaker that is the greatest prig in the streets of London, and an Aldermanbury haberdasher, that has the most military strut of any loungee in Bond-street or St. James's. We may, at any time, raise a regiment of fops from the same number of fools, who have vanity enough to be intoxicated with the smartness of their appearance, and not sense enough to be ashamed of themselves. Every one remembers the story in *Peregrine Pickle*, of the strolling gipsy that he picked up in spite, had well scoured, and introduced her into genteel company, where she met with great applause, till she got into a passion by seeing a fine lady cheat at cards, rapped out a volley of oaths, and let nature get the better of art. Dress is the great secret of address. Clothes and confidence will set anybody up in the trade of modish accomplishment. Look at the two classes of well-dressed females whom we see at the play-house, in the boxes. Both are equally dressed in the height of the fashion, both are *rouged*, and wear their neck and arms bare,—both have the same conscious, haughty, theatrical air;—the same toss of the head, the same stoop in the shoulders, with all the grace that arises from a perfect freedom from embarrassment, and all the fascination that arises from a systematic disdain of formal prudery,—the same pretence and jargon of fashionable conversation,—the same mimicry of tones and phrases,—the same 'lispering, and ambling, and painting, and nicknaming of Heaven's creatures'; the same every thing but real propriety of behaviour, and real refinement of sentiment. In all the externals, they are as like as the reflection



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in the looking-glass. The only difference between the woman of fashion and the woman of pleasure is, that the one *is* what the other only *seems to be*; and yet, the victims of dissipation who thus rival and almost outshine women of the first quality in all the blaze, and pride, and glitter of shew and fashion, are, in general, no better than a set of raw, uneducated, inexperienced country girls, or awkward, coarse-fisted servant maids, who require no other apprenticeship or qualification to be on a level with persons of the highest distinction in society, in all the brilliancy and elegance of outward appearance, than that they have forfeited its common privileges, and every title to respect in reality. The truth is, that real virtue, beauty, or understanding, are the same, whether 'in a high or low degree'; and the airs and graces of pretended superiority over these which the highest classes give themselves, from mere frivolous and external accomplishments, are easily imitated, with provoking success, by the lowest, whenever they *dare*.

The two nearest things in the world are gentility and vulgarity—

'And thin partitions do their bounds divide.'

Where there is much affectation of the one, we may be always sure of meeting with a double share of the other. Those who are conscious to themselves of any real superiority or refinement, are not particularly jealous of the adventitious marks of it. Miss Burney's novels all turn upon this slender distinction. It is the only thing that can be said against them. It is hard to say which she has made out to be the worst; low people always aping gentility, or people in high life always avoiding vulgarity. Mr. Smith and the Brangtons were everlastingly trying to do as their fashionable acquaintances did, and these again were always endeavouring *not* to do and say what Mr. Smith and the Brangtons did or said. What an instructive game at cross-purposes! 'Kings are naturally lovers of low company,' according to the observation of Mr. Burke; because their rank cannot be called into question by it, and they can only hope to find, in the opposite extreme of natural and artificial inequality, any thing to confirm them in the belief, that their personal pretensions at all answer to the ostensible superiority to which they are raised. By associating only with the worst and weakest, they persuade themselves that they are the best and wisest of mankind.

# THOUGHTS ON TASTE

## ESSAY VI

### THOUGHTS ON TASTE

TASTE is nothing but sensibility to the different degrees and kinds of excellence in the works of art or nature. This definition will perhaps be disputed; for I am aware the general practice is to make it consist in a disposition to find fault.

A French man or woman will in general conclude their account of Voltaire's denunciation of Shakespear and Milton as barbarians, on the score of certain technical improprieties, with assuring you, that 'he (Voltaire) had a great deal of taste.' It is their phrase, *Il avait beaucoup du goût*. To which the proper answer is, that that might be; but that he did not shew it in this case; as the overlooking great and countless beauties, and being taken up only with petty or accidental blemishes, shews as little strength of understanding as it does refinement or elevation of taste. The French author, indeed, allows of Shakespear, that 'he had found a few pearls on his enormous dunghill.' But there is neither truth nor proportion in this sentence, for his works are (to say the least),

' Rich as the oozy bottom of the sea,  
With sunken wrack and sumless treasures.'

Genius is the power of producing excellence: taste is the power of perceiving the excellence thus produced in its several sorts and degrees, with all their force, refinement, distinctions, and connections. In other words, taste (as it relates to the productions of art) is strictly the power of being properly affected by works of genius. It is the proportioning admiration to power, pleasure to beauty: it is entire sympathy with the finest impulses of the imagination, not antipathy, not indifference to them. The eye of taste may be said to reflect the impressions of real genius, as the even mirror reflects the objects of nature in all their clearness and lustre, instead of distorting or diminishing them;

' Or like a gate of steel,  
Fronting the sun, receives and renders back  
His figure and his heat.'

To take a pride and pleasure in nothing but defects (and those perhaps of the most paltry, obvious, and mechanical kind)—in the disappointment and tarnishing of our faith in substantial excellence, in the proofs of weakness, not of power, (and this where there are end-

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less subjects to feed the mind with wonder and increased delight through years of patient thought and fond remembrance), is not a sign of uncommon refinement, but of unaccountable perversion of taste. So, in the case of Voltaire's hypercriticisms on Milton and Shakespear, the most common-place and prejudiced admirer of these authors knows, as well as Voltaire can tell him, that it is a fault to make a sea-port (we will say) in Bohemia, or to introduce artillery and gunpowder in the war in Heaven. This is common to Voltaire, and the merest English reader: there is nothing in it either way. But what he differs from us in, and, as it is supposed, greatly to his advantage, and to our infinite shame and mortification, is, that this is all that he perceives, or will hear of in Milton or Shakespear, and that he either knows, or pretends to know, nothing of that prodigal waste, or studied accumulation of grandeur, truth, and beauty, which are to be found in each of these authors. Now, I cannot think, that, to be dull and insensible to so great and such various excellence,—to have no feeling in unison with it, no latent suspicion of the treasures hid beneath our feet, and which we trample upon with ignorant scorn, to be cut off, as by a judicial blindness, from that universe of thought and imagination that shifts its wondrous pageant before us, to turn aside from the throng and splendour of airy shapes that fancy weaves for our dazzled sight, and to strut and vapour over a little pettifogging blunder in geography or chronology, which a school-boy, or a village pedagogue, would be ashamed to insist upon, is any proof of the utmost perfection of taste, but the contrary. At this rate, it makes no difference whether Shakespear wrote his works or not, or whether the critic, who 'damns him into everlasting redemption' for a single slip of the pen, ever read them;—he is absolved from all knowledge; taste, or feeling, of the different excellences, and inimitable creations of the poet's pen—from any sympathy with the wanderings and the fate of Imogen, the beauty and tenderness of Ophelia, the thoughtful abstraction of Hamlet; his soliloquy on life may never have given him a moment's pause, or touched his breast with one solitary reflection;—the Witches in Macbeth may 'lay their choppy fingers upon their skinny lips' without making any alteration in his pulse,—and Lear's heart may break in vain for him;—he may hear no strange noises in Prospero's island,—and the moonlight that sleeps on beds of flowers, where fairies couch in the Midsummer Night's Dream, may never once have steeped his senses in repose. Nor will it avail Milton to 'have built high towers in Heaven,' nor to have brought down heaven upon earth, nor that he has made Satan rear his giant form before us, 'majestic though in ruin,' or decked the bridal-bed of Eve with beauty, or clothed her with innocence, 'likest heaven,' as she

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ministered to Adam, and his angel guest. Our critic knows nothing of all this, of beauty or sublimity, of thought or passion, breathed in sweet or solemn sounds, with all the magic of verse 'in tones and numbers hit'; he lays his finger on the map, and shews you, that there is no sea-port for Shakespear's weather-beaten travellers to land at in Bohemia, and takes out a list of mechanical inventions, and proves that gunpowder was not known till long after Milton's battle of the angels; and concludes, that every one who, after these profound and important discoveries, finds any thing to admire in these two writers, is a person without taste, or any pretensions to it. By the same rule, a thorough-bred critic might prove that Homer was no poet, and the *Odyssey* a vulgar performance, because Ulysses makes a pun on the name of Noman. Or some other disciple of the same literal school might easily set aside the whole merit of Racine's *Athalie*, or Molière's *Ecole des Femmes*, and pronounce these *chef-d'œuvres* of art barbarous and Gothic, because the characters in the first address one another (absurdly enough) as *Monsieur* and *Madame*, and because the latter is written in rhyme, contrary to all classical precedent. These little false measures of criticism may be misapplied and retorted without end, and require to be eked out by national antipathy or political prejudice to give them currency and weight. Thus it was in war-time that the author of the 'Friend' ventured to lump all the French tragedies together as a smart collection of epigrams, and that the author of the 'Excursion, a poem, being portion<sup>1</sup> of a larger poem, to be named the Recluse,' made bold to call Voltaire a dull prose-writer—with impunity. Such pitiful quackery is a cheap way of setting up for exclusive taste and wisdom, by pretending to despise what is most generally admired, as if nothing could come up to or satisfy that ideal standard of excellence, of which the person bears about the select pattern in his own mind. 'Not to admire any thing' is as bad a test of wisdom as it is a rule for happiness. We sometimes meet with individuals who have formed their whole character on this maxim, and who ridiculously affect a decided

<sup>1</sup> Why is the word *portion* here used, as if it were a portion of Scripture?

'Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,  
He wales a *portion* with judicious care.'

*Cottar's Saturday Night.*

Now, Mr. Wordsworth's poems, though not profane, yet neither are they sacred, to deserve this solemn style, though some of his admirers have gone so far as to compare them for primitive, patriarchal simplicity, to the historical parts of the Bible. Much has been said of the merits and defects of this large poem, which is 'portion of a larger';—perhaps Horace's rule has been a double bar to its success—*Non satis est pulchra poemata esse, dulcia sunt*. The features of this author's muse want sweetness of expression as well as regularity of outline.

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and dogmatical tone of superiority over others, from an uncommon degree both of natural and artificial stupidity. They are blind to painting—deaf to music—indifferent to poetry; and they triumph in the catalogue of their defects as the fault of these arts, because they have not sense enough to perceive their own want of perception. To treat any art or science with contempt, is only to prove your own incapacity and want of taste for it: to say that what has been done best in any kind is good for nothing, is to say that the utmost exertion of human ability is not equal to the lowest, for the productions of the lowest are worth something, except by comparison with what is better. When we hear persons exclaiming that the pictures at the Marquis of Stafford's or Mr. Angerstein's, or those at the British Gallery, are a heap of trash, we might tell them that they betray in this a want not of taste only, but of common sense, for that these collections contain some of the finest specimens of the greatest masters, and that *that* must be excellent in the productions of human art, beyond which human genius, in any age or country, has not been able to go. Ask these very fastidious critics what it is that they *do* like, and you will soon find, from tracing out the objects of their secret admiration, that their pretended disdain of first-rate excellence is owing either to ignorance of the last refinements of works of genius, or envy at the general admiration which they have called forth. I have known a furious Philippic against the faults of shining talents and established reputation subside into complacent approbation of dull mediocrity, that neither tasked the kindred sensibility of its admirer beyond its natural inertness, nor touched his self-love with a consciousness of inferiority; and that, by never attempting original beauties, and never failing, gave no opportunity to intellectual ingratitude to be plausibly revenged for the pleasure or instruction it had reluctantly received. So there are judges who cannot abide Mr. Kean, and think Mr. Young an incomparable actor, for no other reason than because he never shocks them with an idea which they had not before. The only excuse for the over-delicacy and supercilious indifference here described, is when it arises from an intimate acquaintance with, and intense admiration of, other and higher degrees of perfection and genius. A person whose mind has been worked up to a lofty pitch of enthusiasm in this way, cannot perhaps condescend to notice, or be much delighted with inferior beauties; but then neither will he dwell upon, and be preposterously offended with, slight faults. So that the ultimate and only conclusive proof of taste is even here not indifference, but enthusiasm; and before a critic can give himself airs of superiority for what he despises, he must first lay himself open to reprisals, by telling us what he admires. There we may

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fairly join issue with him. Without this indispensable condition of all true taste, absolute stupidity must be more than on a par with the most exquisite refinement; and the most formidable drawcansir of all would be the most impenetrable blockhead. Thus, if we know that Voltaire's contempt of Shakespear arose from his idolatry of Racine, this may excuse him in a national point of view; but he has no longer any advantage over us; and we must console ourselves as well as we can for Mr. Wordsworth's not allowing us to laugh at the wit of Voltaire, by laughing now and then at the only author whom he is known to understand and admire!<sup>1</sup>

Instead of making a disposition to find fault a proof of taste, I would reverse the rule, and estimate every one's pretensions to taste by the degree of their sensibility to the highest and most various excellence. An indifference to less degrees of excellence is only excusable as it arises from a knowledge and admiration of higher ones; and a readiness in the detection of faults should pass for refinement only as it is owing to a quick sense and impatient love of beauties. In a word, fine taste consists in sympathy, not in antipathy; and the rejection of what is bad is only to be accounted a virtue when it implies a preference of and attachment to what is better.

There is a certain point, which may be considered as the highest point of perfection at which the human faculties can arrive in the conception and execution of certain things: to be able to reach this point in reality is the greatest proof of genius and power; and I imagine that the greatest proof of taste is given in being able to appreciate it when done. For instance, I have heard (and I can believe) that Madame Catalani's manner of singing 'Hope told a flattering tale,' was the perfection of singing; and I cannot conceive that it would have been the perfection of taste to have thought nothing at all of it. There was, I understand, a sort of fluttering of the voice and a breathless palpitation of the heart, (like the ruffling of the feathers of the robin-redbreast), which completely gave back all the uneasy and thrilling voluptuousness of the sentiment; and I contend that the person on whom not a particle of this expression was lost, (or would have been lost, if it had even been finer), into whom the tones of sweetness or tenderness sink deeper and deeper as they approach the farthest verge of ecstasy or agony, he who has an ear attuned to the trembling harmony, and a heart 'pierceable' by pleasure's finest point, is the best judge of music,—not he who

<sup>1</sup> A French teacher, in reading Titus and Berenice with an English pupil, used to exclaim, in raptures, at the best passages, 'What have you in Shakespear equal to this?' This showed that he had a taste for Racine, and a power of appreciating his beauties, though he might want an equal taste for Shakespear.

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remains insensible to the matter himself, or, if you point it out to him, asks, 'What of it?' I fancied that I had a triumph some time ago, over a critic and connoisseur of music, who thought little of the minuet in *Don Giovanni*; but the same person redeemed his pretensions to musical taste in my opinion by saying of some passage in Mozart, 'This is a soliloquy equal to any in *Hamlet*.' In hearing the accompaniment in the *Messiah* of angels' voices to the shepherds keeping watch at night, who has the most taste and delicacy, he who listens in silent rapture to the silver sounds, as they rise in sweetness and soften into distance, drawing the soul from earth to heaven, and making it partaker of the music of the spheres, or he who remains deaf to the summons, and remarks that it is an allegorical conceit? Which would Handel have been most pleased with, the man who was seen standing at the performance of the Coronation anthem in Westminster Abbey, with his face bathed in tears, and mingling 'the drops which sacred joy had engendered' with that ocean of circling sound, or with him who sat with frigid, critical aspect, his heart untouched and his looks unaltered as the marble statue on the wall? <sup>1</sup>—Again, if any one, in looking at Rembrandt's picture of Jacob's Dream, should not be struck with the solemn awe that surrounds it, and with the dazzling flights of angels' wings like steps of golden light, emanations of flame or spirit hovering between earth and sky, and should observe very wisely that Jacob was thrown in one corner of the picture like a bundle of clothes, without power, form, or motion, and should think this a defect, I should say that such a critic might possess great knowledge of the mechanical part of painting, but not an atom of feeling or imagination.<sup>2</sup> Or who is it that, in looking at the productions of Raphael or Titian, is the person of true taste? He who finds what there is, or he who finds what there is not in

<sup>1</sup> It is a fashion among the scientific or pedantic part of the musical world to decry Miss Stephens's singing as feeble and insipid. This it is to take things by their contraries. Her excellence does not lie in force or contrast, but in sweetness and simplicity. To give only one instance. Any person who does not feel the beauty of her singing the lines in Artaxerxes, 'What was my pride is now my shame,' &c., in which the notes seem to fall from her lips like languid drops from the bending flower, and her voice flutters and dies away with the expiring conflict of passion in her bosom, may console himself with the possession of other faculties, but assuredly he has no ear for music.

<sup>2</sup> There is a very striking and spirited picture of this subject by an ingenious living artist (Mr. Alston), in the present exhibition of the Royal Academy. The academic skill in it is admirable, and many of the forms are truly elegant and beautiful; but I may be permitted to add, that the scene (as he represents it) too much resembles the courtly designs of Vitruvius or Palladio, rather than 'a temple not made with hands, eternal in the heavens'; and that the angels seem rather preparing to dance a minuet or grand ballet on the marble pavement which they tread, than descending the air in a dream of love, of hope, and gratitude.

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each? Not he who picks a petty vulgar quarrel with the colouring of Raphael or the drawing of Titian is the true critic and judicious spectator, but he who broods over the expression of the one till it takes possession of his soul, and who dwells on the tones and hues of the other till his eye is saturated with truth and beauty, for by this means he moulds his mind to the study and reception of what is most perfect in form and colour, instead of letting it remain empty, 'swept and garnished,' or rather a dull blank, with 'knowledge at each entrance quite shut out.' He who cavils at the want of drawing in Titian is not the most sensible to it in Raphael; instead of that, he only insists on his want of colouring. He who is offended at Raphael's hardness and monotony is not delighted with the soft, rich pencilling of Titian; he only takes care to find fault with him for wanting that which, if he possessed it in the highest degree, he would not admire or understand. And this is easy to be accounted for. First, such a critic has been told what to do, and follows his instructions. Secondly, to perceive the height of any excellence, it is necessary to have the most exquisite sense of that kind of excellence through all its gradations: to perceive the want of any excellence, it is merely necessary to have a negative or abstract notion of the thing, or perhaps only of the name. Or, in other words, any the most crude and mechanical idea of a given quality is a measure of positive deficiency, whereas none but the most refined idea of the same quality can be a standard of superlative merit. 'To distinguish the finest characteristics of Titian or Raphael, to go along with them in their imitation of Nature, is to be so far like them: to be occupied only with that in which they fell short of others, instead of that in which they soared above them, shows a vulgar, narrow capacity, insensible to any thing beyond mediocrity, and an ambition still more grovelling. To be dazzled by admiration of the greatest excellence, and of the highest works of genius, is natural to the best capacities, and the best natures; envy and dulness are most apt to detect minute blemishes and unavoidable inequalities, as we see the spots in the sun by having its rays blunted by mist or smoke. It may be asked, then, whether mere extravagance and enthusiasm are proofs of taste? And I answer, no, where they are without reason and knowledge. Mere sensibility is not true taste, but sensibility to real excellence is. To admire and be wrapt up in what is trifling or absurd, is a proof of nothing but ignorance or affectation: on the contrary, he who admires most what is most worthy of admiration, (let his raptures or his eagerness to express them be what they may), shews himself neither extravagant nor 'unwise.' When Mr. Wordsworth once said that he could read the description of Satan in Milton,



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'Nor seem'd  
Less than archangel ruin'd, and the excess  
Of glory obscur'd,'

till he felt a certain faintness come over his mind from a sense of beauty and grandeur, I saw no extravagance in this, but the utmost truth of feeling. When the same author, or his friend Mr. Southey, says, that the *Excursion* is better worth preserving than the *Paradise Lost*, this appears to me, I confess, a great piece of impertinence, or an unwarrantable stretch of friendship. Nor do I think the preference given by certain celebrated reviewers, of Mr. Rogers's *Human Life* over Mr. Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads*, founded on the true principles of poetical justice ; for something is, after all, better than nothing.

To hasten to a conclusion of these desultory observations. The highest taste is shewn in habitual sensibility to the greatest beauties ; the most general taste is shewn in a perception of the greatest variety of excellence. Many people admire Milton, and as many admire Pope, while there are but few who have any relish for both. Almost all the disputes on this subject arise, not so much from false, as from confined taste. We suppose that only one thing can have merit ; and that, if we allow it to any thing else, we deprive the favourite object of our critical faith of the honours due to it. We are generally right in what we approve ourselves ; for liking proceeds from a certain conformity of objects to the taste ; as we are generally wrong in condemning what others admire ; for our dislike mostly proceeds from our want of taste for what pleases them. Our being totally senseless to what excites extreme delight in those who have as good a right to judge as we have, in all human probability implies a defect of faculty in us, rather than a limitation in the resources of nature or art. Those who are pleased with the fewest things, know the least ; as those who are pleased with every thing, know nothing. Shakespear makes Mrs. Quickly say of Falstaff, by a pleasant blunder, that '*Carnation was a colour he could never abide.*' So there are persons who cannot like Claude, because he is not *Salvator Rosa* ; some who cannot endure Rembrandt, and others who would not cross the street to see a Vandyke ; one reader does not like the neatness of Junius, and another objects to the extravagance of Burke ; and they are all right, if they expect to find in others what is only to be found in their favourite author or artist, but equally wrong if they mean to say, that each of those they would condemn by a narrow and arbitrary standard of taste, has not a peculiar and transcendent merit of his own. The question is not, whether *you* like a certain excellence, (it is your own fault if you do not), but whether another possessed it in a very eminent degree. If he did not, who is there that possessed it in a

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greater—that ranks above him in that particular? Those who are accounted the best, are the best in their line. When we say that Rembrandt was a master of *chiaro-scuro*, for instance, we do not say that he joined to this the symmetry of the Greek statues, but we mean that we must go to him for the perfection of *chiaro-scuro*, and that a Greek statue has not *chiaro-scuro*. If any one objects to Junius's Letters, that they are a tissue of epigrams, we answer, Be it so; it is for that very reason that we admire them. Again, should any one find fault with Mr. Burke's writings as a collection of rhapsodies, the proper answer always would be, Who is there that has written finer rhapsodies? I know an admirer of Don Quixote who can see no merit in Gil Blas, and an admirer of Gil Blas who could never get through Don Quixote. I myself have great pleasure in reading both these works, and in that respect think I have an advantage over both these critics. It always struck me as a singular proof of good taste, good sense, and liberal thinking, in an old friend, who had Paine's Rights of Man and Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution bound up in one volume, and who said, that, both together, they made a very good book. To agree with the greatest number of good judges, is to be in the right; and good judges are persons of natural sensibility and acquired knowledge.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, it must be owned, there are critics whose praise is a libel, and whose recommendation of any work is enough to condemn it. Men of the greatest genius and originality are not always persons of the most liberal and unprejudiced taste; they have a strong bias to certain qualities themselves, are for reducing others to their own standard, and lie less open to the general impressions of things. This exclusive preference of their own peculiar excellencies to those of others, in writers whose merits have not been sufficiently understood or acknowledged by their contemporaries, chiefly because they were *not* common-place, may sometimes be seen mounting up to a degree of bigotry and intolerance, little short of insanity. There are some critics I have known who never allow an author any merit till all the world 'cry out upon him,' and others who never allow another any merit that any one can discover but themselves. So there are connoisseurs who spend their lives and waste their breath in extolling sublime passages in obscure writers, and lovers who choose their mistresses for their ugly faces. This is not taste, but affectation. What is popular is not necessarily vulgar; and that which

<sup>1</sup> I apprehend that natural is of more importance than acquired sensibility. Thus, any one, without having been at an opera, may judge of opera dancing, only from having seen (with judicious eyes) a stag bound across a lawn, or a tree wave its branches in the air. In all, the general principles of motion are the same.

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we try to rescue from fatal obscurity, had in general much better remain in it.

### ESSAY VII

#### CHARACTER OF THE COUNTRY PEOPLE

‘Here be truths.’—*Dogberry*.

FIRST, there is an old woman in the neighbouring village, fifty-six years old, with a wooden leg, who never saw a leg of mutton roasted, or a piece of beef put into the pot; and who regards any person who has not lived all his life on rusty bacon as a non-descript or ‘mountain foreigner.’ Yet this venerable matron, who now officiates as cook to a lady ‘retired from public haunts’ into a remote part of the country, kept her father’s house, who was a little farmer, for twenty years; so that she ranks, in the scale of rural existence, above her neighbours. What then must the notions of most of them be of the *savoir vivre*? Is this the sum and substance of all our boasts of the roast-beef of old England?—The truth is, that the people in this part of the country (I do not know how it is in others) have neither food nor cloathing wherewith to be content; nor are they content without them, nor with those that have them. Any one dressed in a plain broad-cloth coat is in their eyes a sophisticated character, as outlandish a figure as my Lord Foppington. A smock-frock, and shoes with hob-nails in them, are an indispensable part of country etiquette; and they hoot at or pelt any one, who is presumptuous enough to depart from this appropriate costume. This, if we may believe a philosophical poet of the present day, is the meaning of the phrase in Shakespear, ‘pelting villages,’ he having been once set upon in this manner by ‘a crew of patches, rude mechanicals,’ who disliked him for the fantastic strangeness of his appearance. Even their tailors (of whom you might expect better things) hate decency, and will spoil you a suit of clothes, rather than follow your directions. One of them, the little hunch-backed tailor of P—tt—n, with the handsome daughter, whose husband ran away from her and went to sea, was ordered to make a pair of brown or snuff-coloured breeches for my friend C— L—;—instead of which the pragmatistical old gentleman (having an opinion of his own) brought him home a pair of ‘lively Lincoln-green,’ in which I remember he rode in triumph in Johnny Tremain’s cross-country caravan through Newberry, and entered Oxford, ‘fearing no colours,’ the abstract idea of the jest

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of the thing prevailing in his mind (as it always does) over the sense of personal dignity.

If a stranger comes to live among country people, they have a bad opinion of him at first; and all he can do to overcome their dislike, only confirms them in it. It is in vain to attempt to conciliate them: the more you strive to persuade them that you mean them no harm, the more they are determined not to be convinced. They attribute any civility or kindness you shew them to a design to cajole them. They are not to be taken in by appearances. They are *feræ naturæ*, and not to be tamed by art. In proportion as you give them no cause of offence, they summon their whole stock of prejudice, impudence, and cunning, to aid their tottering opinion; and hate you the more for the injustice they seem to do you. They had rather you did them an injury that they might keep their original opinion of you. If there is the smallest circumstance or insinuation to your prejudice, their rancour against you, and self-complacency in their own sagacity, eagerly seizes hold of it; fans their suspicions into a flame, and breaks out into open insult and all the triumph of brutal derision. On the contrary, if they find you, after all, a quiet, inoffensive person, they think you a fool, and so have you that way. Used to contempt, they have not much respect to spare for other people. Finding themselves none the better for them, they have not much faith in your demonstrations of good-will towards them. Prepared for repulses and hard treatment, the expression of their gratitude is not very spontaneous or sincere.—An aged Sybil of this place, having gone to a lady, who had just settled here, with a doleful tale of distress, and an empty bottle, received a shilling instead of having her bottle replenished with liquor; when being met on her return by one of her gossips coming on the same errand, and being asked her success, she held up her empty bottle in sign of scorn, saying, ‘Look here!’ Such is the *beau idéal* of unsophisticated human nature in her obscure retreats, about which there have been so many ‘songs of delight and rustical roundelays.’

Is it strange that these people who know nothing, hate all that they do not understand? Their rudeness, intolerance, and conceit, are in exact proportion to their ignorance: for as they never saw or scarcely heard of any thing out of their own village, every thing else appears to them odd and unaccountable, and they cannot suspect that their own notions are wrong, when they are totally unacquainted with any others. We naturally despise whatever baffles our comprehension, and dislike what contradicts our prejudices, till we are taught better by a liberal course of study; but these people are no better taught than fed. It is a rule which they act upon as self-

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evident, and from which you will not get them to flinch in a hurry—to scout every proceeding which differs from their own, and to consider every person, of whose birth, parentage, and education, they do not know the several particulars, as a suspicious character. They have no knowledge of literature or the fine arts; which, if once banished from the city and the court, would soon ‘be trampled in the mire under the hoofs of a swinish multitude.’ A mischievous wag of the present day undertook to read some pastoral and lyrical effusions, (remarkable for their simplicity), to a collection of Cumberland peasants, to see if they would recognise the sentiments put into their mouths; and they only (which was what he expected) laughed at him for his pains. ‘The spinsters and the knitters in the sun, and the free maids that weave their thread with bones,’ may indeed relieve the welcome pedlar of his wares, his laces, his true love-knots, or penny-ballads, but they will have nothing to say to the Lyrical Ballads, nor will the united counties of Westmorland, Cumberland, and Durham subscribe to lighten the London warehouses of a single copy of the *Excursion*. The hewers of wood and drawers of water know nothing of poetry, and they hate the very look of a poet. They like a painter as little. An artist who was making a sketch of a fine old yew tree in a romantic situation, was asked by a *knowing hand*, if he could tell how many foot of timber it contained? Falstaff asks as a question not to be answered—‘May I not take mine ease at mine inn?’ But this was in East-Cheap. I cannot do so in the country; for while I am writing this, I hear a fellow disputing in the kitchen, whether a person ought to live (as he expresses it) by pen and ink; and the landlord the other day (in order, I suppose, the better to prepare himself for such controversies) asked me if I had any object in reading through all those books which I had brought with me, meaning a few odd volumes of old plays and novels. The people born here cannot tell how an author gets his living or passes his time; and would fain hunt him out of the place as they do a strange dog, or as they formerly did a conjuror or a witch. Ask the first country clown you meet, if he ever heard of Shakespear or Newton, and he will stare in your face: and I remember our laughing a good deal at W——’s old Molly, who had never heard of the French Revolution, ten years after it happened. Oh worse than Gothic ignorance!

They have no books, nor ever feel the want of them. How indeed should they? <sup>1</sup> They have no works of poetry or fiction, to ‘fleet the golden time carelessly’; but they do not therefore want

<sup>1</sup> At Salisbury, which is a cathedral and county town, you cannot get a copy of Congreve or Wycherley at any of the shops.

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for fabulous resources. Necessity is the mother of invention; and their talent for lying and scandal is nourished by the very lack of materials.<sup>1</sup> They live not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of their mouths. They are employed, like the Athenians of old, in hearing or telling some new thing. The draw-well is the source from which they pump up idle rumours, and the blacksmith's shop is the place at which they forge the proofs, and turn them to shape, 'giving to airy nothing a local habitation and a name.' They lie like devils through thick and thin. They tell and believe all incredible things; and the greater the improbability, the more readily and greedily is it swallowed, for it imposes more on the imagination. *To elevate and surprise* is the great rule for producing a theatrical or pastoral effect. People in a state of nature believe any thing for want of something to divert the mind, as they plot mischief for want of better employment. Credulity and imposture are two of the strongest propensities of the human mind. Men are as prone to deceive themselves as others, without any other temptation than the exercise it affords to the imagination. It is a false test of historical evidence, that it is necessary to assign a motive why men should consent to be dupes or undertake to be cheats. Curiosity is the source of superstition; for we must have objects to occupy the attention, and fill up the craving void of knowledge; and in the absence of truth, falsehood is called in to supply its place, and with the gross and ignorant, supplies it much better. To ask why the untutored savage believes every marvellous story that is told him, in the dearth of all real knowledge, is to ask why he slakes his thirst at the first fountain that he meets, or devours the prey he has just taken. With all their tendency to bigotry and superstition, country people have scarcely any idea of religion. They have as little divine as human learning. The Bible is the only book they have, but that they do not read, except with spectacles, when they grow old and half-blind. They are to a man and woman of Mrs. Quickly's opinion—'But I told him a' should not think of God yet.' They go to church, to be sure, as a matter of course, and from not knowing what else to do with themselves on Sundays; but they never think of what they hear, from one week's end to another. Heaven and Hell are out-of-the-way places, not accessible to the apprehensions of those whose ideas cannot get beyond the parish

<sup>1</sup> The knack of off-hand, unprincipled, idle fabrication is not assisted, but the contrary, by general knowledge or regular education. Women, for this reason, have the better of their husbands in trumping up sudden excuses and contrivances that have no foundation in fact or reason; and their servant-maids, who are more uneducated still, beat them hollow at the same paltry game of cross-purposes.

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where they were born; and their joys or sorrows indifferent to an imagination, taken up with the wants of the belly. An old woman, who lived in a cottage by herself, on hearing the account of the Crucifixion, said it was a sad thing, but she hoped it was not true, as it happened so far off and such a long time ago. A servant girl, hearing a sermon read in which there was a striking account of the Resurrection and the Day of Judgment, was very much alarmed, and said she hoped it would not be in her time. The Decalogue has no terrors, and the Book of Revelations no charms for them. They will be damned, but they will steal and lie, and bear false witness against each other; or if they do not, it is the fear of being hanged, or whipped, or summoned before the Justice of the Peace, and not of being called to account in another world, that prevents them. They are of the earth, earthy. They take thought only for the morrow; or rather, conform to the text—'Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof.' There is not a greater mistake, or a more wilful fallacy, than the common observation, that the lower orders are kept in order (and can only be so) by their faith in religion. They have no more belief in it practically than most of their betters, who propose to keep them in order by it, have speculatively. The ignorant and destitute are restrained from certain things by the fear of the law, or of what will be said of them by their neighbours; and as to other things which are denounced by Scripture, but to which no penalty attaches here, they think if they have a mind to do them, and chuse to go to hell for it, they have a right to do so. That is their phrase. It is nobody's business but their own. It is (generally speaking) the absence of temptation or opportunity, and not an excess of religious apprehension, that keeps them within the pale of salvation. Their self-will balances their fear of the Devil, and when it comes to the push, the present motive turns the scale, and the flesh proves too hard for the spirit. Burns's old man in the *Cottar's Saturday Night* must pass for a very poetical character, at least in this part of the country. We see constant accounts in the papers, in the case of malefactors that have come to an untimely end, that it was owing in the first instance to the want of religion, to the habit of swearing and Sabbath-breach. The same account would hold equally true of those who are not hanged: for if all but the godly and sober among the lower classes came to the gallows, the population would soon be thinned to a surprising degree.

' 'Twould thin the land  
Such numbers to string on Tyburn tree.'

As to the regular church-going peasantry, there can be no great

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difference as to religious light and feelings between them and their forefathers in the time of Popery, when the service was performed in Latin, as it is at present in most foreign countries. The only religious people (except as a matter of outward shew and ceremony) are sectaries; for the instant religion becomes a subject for serious thought and private reflection, it produces differences of opinion, which branch out into as many speculative fancies and forms of worship, as there are differences of temper or accidents of education.<sup>1</sup> This, however, is the exception, not the rule, in the present state of things—now that zeal is no longer kindled at the fires of persecution, and that Acts of Uniformity no longer throw the whole country into a ferment of opposition. The missionaries and fanatics sometimes indeed set up a methodist chapel, where the staid inhabitants go in an evening to spite the parson of the parish, or to while away an hour or so; or perhaps a melancholy mechanic has a serious call and holds forth, or a pining spinster, moved by the spirit to listen to him—

‘ Anon as patient as the female dove,  
The whilst her golden couplets are disclos’d,  
Awhile sits drooping : ’

but the younger and healthier sort make a sport of it as of any other fantastical innovation; throw owls and skeletons of kites and carrion crows into the place of worship; and make a violent noise all the time the parson is preaching, to drown the nasal twang of evangelical glad-tidings, and the comfortable groans of the faithful.—All this while there is no end of the bastard-getting and swearing: and a girl, after having had three or four children by the same man, or by different men (as it happens), and who is as big as she can tumble again, is at length asked in church, without much scandal or offence to the community. It is a new topic for the village, and is excused on that account. It is, besides, an evidence quashed; and whatever others may take it into their heads to do, she need not talk. Liberality flourishes; a good example is set; and the species is propagated with as little trouble and formality as possible. The parson gets something by the christening, and the apothecary has a finger in the pie. This is a state of things which ought to be reformed—but how or when?

<sup>1</sup> It is observed and perhaps justly that the members of the Established Church are the pleasantest sort of people to deal with. Dissenters are more soured by the leaven of religion. The others do not trouble themselves enough about it to come to a conclusion of their own, or to quarrel with other people who do. They are religious merely out of conformity to the practice of the age and country in which they live, and follow that which has authority and numbers on its side.



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### ESSAY VIII

#### THE FIGHT

'—The *fight*, the *fight*'s the thing,  
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.'

*Where there's a will, there's a way.*—I said so to myself, as I walked down Chancery-lane, about half-past six o'clock on Monday the 10th of December, to inquire at Jack Randall's where the fight the next day was to be; and I found 'the proverb' nothing 'musty' in the present instance. I was determined to see this fight, come what would, and see it I did, in great style. It was my *first fight*, yet it more than answered my expectations. Ladies! it is to you I dedicate this description; nor let it seem out of character for the fair to notice the exploits of the brave. Courage and modesty are the old English virtues; and may they never look cold and askance on one another! Think, ye fairest of the fair, loveliest of the lovely kind, ye practisers of soft enchantment, how many more ye kill with poisoned baits than ever fell in the ring; and listen with subdued air and without shuddering, to a tale tragic only in appearance, and sacred to the FANCY!

I was going down Chancery-lane, thinking to ask at Jack Randall's where the fight was to be, when looking through the glass-door of the *Hole in the Wall*, I heard a gentleman asking the same question at Mrs. Randall, as the author of *Waverley* would express it. Now Mrs. Randall stood answering the gentleman's question, with the authenticity of the lady of the Champion of the Light Weights. Thinks I, I'll wait till this person comes out, and learn from him how it is. For to say a truth, I was not fond of going into this house of call for heroes and philosophers, ever since the owner of it (for Jack is no gentleman) threatened once upon a time to kick me out of doors for wanting a mutton-chop at his hospitable board, when the conqueror in thirteen battles was more full of *blue ruin* than of good manners. I was the more mortified at this repulse, inasmuch as I had heard Mr. James Simpkins, hosier in the Strand, one day when the character of the *Hole in the Wall* was brought in question, observe—'The house is a very good house, and the company quite genteel: I have been there myself!' Remembering this unkind treatment of mine host, to which mine hostess was also a party, and not wishing to put her in unquiet thoughts at a time jubilant like the present, I waited at the door, when, who should issue forth but my friend Joe Toms, and turning suddenly up Chancery-lane with that

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quick jerk and impatient stride which distinguishes a lover of the FANCY, I said, 'I'll be hanged if that fellow is not going to the fight, and is on his way to get me to go with him.' So it proved in effect, and we agreed to adjourn to my lodgings to discuss measures with that cordiality which makes old friends like new, and new friends like old, on great occasions. We are cold to others only when we are dull in ourselves, and have neither thoughts nor feelings to impart to them. Give a man a topic in his head, a throb of pleasure in his heart, and he will be glad to share it with the first person he meets. Toms and I, though we seldom meet, were an *alter idem* on this memorable occasion, and had not an idea that we did not candidly impart; and 'so carelessly did we fleet the time,' that I wish no better, when there is another fight, than to have him for a companion on my journey down, and to return with my friend Jack Pigott, talking of what was to happen or of what did happen, with a noble subject always at hand, and liberty to digress to others whenever they offered. Indeed, on my repeating the lines from Spenser in an involuntary fit of enthusiasm,

'What more felicity can fall to creature,  
Than to enjoy delight with liberty?'

my last-named ingenious friend stopped me by saying that this, translated into the vulgate, meant '*Going to see a fight.*'

Joe Toms and I could not settle about the method of going down. He said there was a caravan, he understood, to start from Tom Belcher's at two, which would go there *right out* and back again the next day. Now I never travel all night, and said I should get a cast to Newbury by one of the mails. Joe swore the thing was impossible, and I could only answer that I had made up my mind to it. In short, he seemed to me to waver, said he only came to see if I was going, had letters to write, a cause coming on the day after, and faintly said at parting (for I was bent on setting out that moment) —'Well, we meet at Philippi!' I made the best of my way to Piccadilly. The mail coach stand was bare. 'They are all gone,' said I—'this is always the way with me—in the instant I lose the future—if I had not stayed to pour out that last cup of tea, I should have been just in time'—and cursing my folly and ill-luck together, without inquiring at the coach-office whether the mails were gone or not, I walked on in despite, and to punish my own dilatoriness and want of determination. At any rate, I would not turn back: I might get to Hounslow, or perhaps farther, to be on my road the next morning. I passed Hyde Park Corner (my Rubicon), and trusted to fortune. Suddenly I heard the clattering of a Brentford

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stage, and the fight rushed full upon my fancy. I argued (not unwisely) that even a Brentford coachman was better company than my own thoughts (such as they were just then), and at his invitation mounted the box with him. I immediately stated my case to him—namely, my quarrel with myself for missing the Bath or Bristol mail, and my determination to get on in consequence as well as I could, without any disparagement or insulting comparison between longer or shorter stages. It is a maxim with me that stage-coaches, and consequently stage-coachmen, are respectable in proportion to the distance they have to travel: so I said nothing on that subject to my Brentford friend. Any incipient tendency to an abstract proposition, or (as he might have construed it) to a personal reflection of this kind, was however nipped in the bud; for I had no sooner declared indignantly that I had missed the mails, than he flatly denied that they were gone along, and lo! at the instant three of them drove by in rapid, provoking, orderly succession, as if they would devour the ground before them. Here again I seemed in the contradictory situation of the man in Dryden who exclaims,

‘I follow Fate, which does too hard pursue!’

If I had stopped to inquire at the White Horse Cellar, which would not have taken me a minute, I should now have been driving down the road in all the dignified unconcern and *ideal* perfection of mechanical conveyance. The Bath mail I had set my mind upon, and I had missed it, as I missed every thing else, by my own absurdity, in putting the will for the deed, and aiming at ends without employing means. ‘Sir,’ said he of the Brentford, ‘the Bath mail will be up presently, my brother-in-law drives it, and I will engage to stop him if there is a place empty.’ I almost doubted my good genius; but, sure enough, up it drove like lightning, and stopped directly at the call of the Brentford Jehu. I would not have believed this possible, but the brother-in-law of a mail-coach driver is himself no mean man. I was transferred without loss of time from the top of one coach to that of the other, desired the guard to pay my fare to the Brentford coachman for me as I had no change, was accommodated with a great coat, put up my umbrella to keep off a drizzling mist, and we began to cut through the air like an arrow. The mile-stones disappeared one after another, the rain kept off; Tom Turtle, the trainer, sat before me on the coach-box, with whom I exchanged civilities as a gentleman going to the fight; the passion that had transported me an hour before was subdued to pensive regret and conjectural musing on the next day’s battle; I was

## THE FIGHT

promised a place inside at Reading, and upon the whole, I thought myself a lucky fellow. Such is the force of imagination! On the outside of any other coach on the 10th of December, with a Scotch mist drizzling through the cloudy moonlight air, I should have been cold, comfortless, impatient, and, no doubt, wet through; but seated on the Royal mail, I felt warm and comfortable, the air did me good, the ride did me good, I was pleased with the progress we had made, and confident that all would go well through the journey. When I got inside at Reading, I found Turtle and a stout valetudinarian, whose costume bespoke him one of the FANCY, and who had risen from a three months' sick bed to get into the mail to see the fight. They were intimate, and we fell into a lively discourse. My friend the trainer was confined in his topics to fighting dogs and men, to bears and badgers; beyond this he was 'quite chap-fallen,' had not a word to throw at a dog, or indeed very wisely fell asleep, when any other game was started. The whole art of training (I, however, learnt from him) consists in two things, exercise and abstinence, abstinence and exercise, repeated alternately and without end. A yolk of an egg with a spoonful of rum in it is the first thing in a morning, and then a walk of six miles till breakfast. This meal consists of a plentiful supply of tea and toast and beef-steaks. Then another six or seven miles till dinner-time, and another supply of solid beef or mutton with a pint of porter, and perhaps, at the utmost, a couple of glasses of sherry. Martin trains on water, but this increases his infirmity on another very dangerous side. The Gas-man takes now and then a chirping glass (under the rose) to console him, during a six weeks' probation, for the absence of Mrs. Hickman—an agreeable woman, with (I understand) a pretty fortune of two hundred pounds. How matter presses on me! What stubborn things are facts! How inexhaustible is nature and art! 'It is well,' as I once heard Mr. Richmond observe, 'to see a variety.' He was speaking of cock-fighting as an edifying spectacle. I cannot deny but that one learns more of what *is* (I do not say of what *ought to be*) in this desultory mode of practical study, than from reading the same book twice over, even though it should be a moral treatise. Where was I? I was sitting at dinner with the candidate for the honours of the ring, 'where good digestion waits on appetite, and health on both.' Then follows an hour of social chat and native glee; and afterwards, to another breathing over heathy hill or dale. Back to supper, and then to bed, and up by six again—Our hero

' Follows so the ever-running sun  
With profitable *ardour* '—

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to the day that brings him victory or defeat in the green fairy circle. Is not this life more sweet than mine? I was going to say; but I will not libel any life by comparing it to mine, which is (at the date of these presents) bitter as coloquintida and the dregs of aconitum!

The invalid in the Bath mail soared a pitch above the trainer, and did not sleep so sound, because he had 'more figures and more fantasies.' We talked the hours away merrily. He had faith in surgery, for he had had three ribs set right, that had been broken in a *turn-up* at Belcher's, but thought physicians old women, for they had no antidote in their catalogue for brandy. An indigestion is an excellent common-place for two people that never met before. By way of ingratiating myself, I told him the story of my doctor, who, on my earnestly representing to him that I thought his regimen had done me harm, assured me that the whole pharmacopeia contained nothing comparable to the prescription he had given me; and, as a proof of its undoubted efficacy, said that, 'he had had one gentleman with my complaint under his hands for the last fifteen years.' This anecdote made my companion shake the rough sides of his three great coats with boisterous laughter; and Turtle, starting out of his sleep, swore he knew how the fight would go, for he had had a dream about it. Sure enough the rascal told us how the three first rounds went off, but 'his dream,' like others, 'denoted a foregone conclusion.' He knew his men. The moon now rose in silver state, and I ventured, with some hesitation, to point out this object of placid beauty, with the blue serene beyond, to the man of science, to which his ear he 'seriously inclined,' the more as it gave promise *d'un beau jour* for the morrow, and showed the ring undrenched by envious showers, arrayed in sunny smiles. Just then, all going on well, I thought on my friend Toms, whom I had left behind, and said innocently, 'There was a blockhead of a fellow I left in town, who said there was no possibility of getting down by the mail, and talked of going by a caravan from Belcher's at two in the morning, after he had written some letters.' 'Why,' said he of the lapells, 'I should not wonder if that was the very person we saw running about like mad from one coach-door to another, and asking if any one had seen a friend of his, a gentleman going to the fight, whom he had missed stupidly enough by staying to write a note.' 'Pray, Sir,' said my fellow-traveller, 'had he a plaid-cloak on?'—'Why, no,' said I, 'not at the time I left him, but he very well might afterwards, for he offered to lend me one.' The plaid-cloak and the letter decided the thing. Joe, sure enough, was in the Bristol mail, which preceded us by about fifty yards. This was droll

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enough. We had now but a few miles to our place of destination, and the first thing I did on alighting at Newbury, both coaches stopping at the same time, was to call out, 'Pray, is there a gentleman in that mail of the name of Toms?' 'No,' said Joe, borrowing something of the vein of Gilpin, 'for I have just got out.' 'Well!' says he, 'this is lucky; but you don't know how vexed I was to miss you; for,' added he, lowering his voice, 'do you know when I left you I went to Belcher's to ask about the caravan, and Mrs. Belcher said very obligingly she couldn't tell about that, but there were two gentlemen who had taken places by the mail and were gone on in a landau, and she could frank us. It's a pity I didn't meet with you; we could then have got down for nothing. But *mum's the word.*' It's the devil for any one to tell me a secret, for it's sure to come out in print. I do not care so much to gratify a friend, but the public ear is too great a temptation to me.

Our present business was to get beds and a supper at an inn; but this was no easy task. The public-houses were full, and where you saw a light at a private house, and people poking their heads out of the casement to see what was going on, they instantly put them in and shut the window, the moment you seemed advancing with a suspicious overture for accommodation. Our guard and coachman thundered away at the outer gate of the Crown for some time without effect—such was the greater noise within;—and when the doors were unbarred, and we got admittance, we found a party assembled in the kitchen round a good hospitable fire, some sleeping, others drinking, others talking on politics and on the fight. A tall English yeoman (something like Matthews in the face, and quite as great a wag)—

'A lusty man to ben an abbot able,'—

was making such a prodigious noise about rent and taxes, and the price of corn now and formerly, that he had prevented us from being heard at the gate. The first thing I heard him say was to a shuffling fellow who wanted to be off a bet for a shilling glass of brandy and water—'Confound it, man, don't be *insipid*!' Thinks I, that is a good phrase. It was a good omen. He kept it up so all night, nor flinched with the approach of morning. He was a fine fellow, with sense, wit, and spirit, a hearty body and a joyous mind, free-spoken, frank, convivial—one of that true English breed that went with Harry the Fifth to the siege of Harfleur—'standing like greyhounds in the slips,' &c. We ordered tea and eggs (beds were soon found to be out of the question) and this fellow's conversation was *sauce piquante*. It did one's heart good to see him brandish his

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oaken towel and to hear him talk. He made mince-meat of a drunken, stupid, red-faced, quarrelsome, *frowsy* farmer, whose nose 'he moralised into a thousand similes,' making it out a firebrand like Bardolph's. 'I'll tell you what, my friend,' says he, 'the landlady has only to keep you here to save fire and candle. If one was to touch your nose, it would go off like a piece of charcoal.' At this the other only grinned like an idiot, the sole variety in his purple face being his little peering grey eyes and yellow teeth; called for another glass, swore he would not stand it; and after many attempts to provoke his humorous antagonist to single combat, which the other turned off (after working him up to a ludicrous pitch of choler) with great adroitness, he fell quietly asleep with a glass of liquor in his hand, which he could not lift to his head. His laughing persecutor made a speech over him, and turning to the opposite side of the room, where they were all sleeping in the midst of this 'loud and furious fun,' said, 'There's a scene, by G—d, for Hogarth to paint. I think he and Shakespear were our two best men at copying life.' This confirmed me in my good opinion of him. Hogarth, Shakespear, and Nature, were just enough for him (indeed for any man) to know. I said, 'You read Cobbett, don't you? At least,' says I, 'you talk just as well as he writes.' He seemed to doubt this. But I said, 'We have an hour to spare: if you'll get pen, ink, and paper, and keep on talking, I'll write down what you say; and if it doesn't make a capital Political Register, I'll forfeit my head. You have kept me alive to-night, however. I don't know what I should have done without you.' He did not dislike this view of the thing, nor my asking if he was not about the size of Jem Belcher; and told me soon afterwards, in the confidence of friendship, that 'the circumstance which had given him nearly the greatest concern in his life, was Cribb's beating Jem after he had lost his eye by racket-playing.'—The morning dawns; that dim but yet clear light appears, which weighs like solid bars of metal on the sleepless eyelids; the guests drop down from their chambers one by one—but it was too late to think of going to bed now (the clock was on the stroke of seven), we had nothing for it but to find a barber's (the pole that glittered in the morning sun lighted us to his shop), and then a nine miles' march to Hungerford. The day was fine, the sky was blue, the mists were retiring from the marshy ground, the path was tolerably dry, the sitting-up all night had not done us much harm—at least the cause was good; we talked of this and that with amicable difference, roving and sipping of many subjects, but still invariably we returned to the fight. At length, a mile to the left of Hungerford, on a gentle eminence, we saw the ring surrounded

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by covered carts, gigs, and carriages, of which hundreds had passed us on the road ; Toms gave a youthful shout, and we hastened down a narrow lane to the scene of action.

Reader, have you ever seen a fight ? If not, you have a pleasure to come, at least if it is a fight like that between the Gas-man and Bill Neate. The crowd was very great when we arrived on the spot ; open carriages were coming up, with streamers flying and music playing, and the country-people were pouring in over hedge and ditch in all directions, to see their hero beat or be beaten. The odds were still on Gas, but only about five to four. Gully had been down to try Neate, and had backed him considerably, which was a damper to the sanguine confidence of the adverse party. About two hundred thousand pounds were pending. The Gas says, he has lost 3000*l.* which were promised him by different gentlemen if he had won. He had presumed too much on himself, which had made others presume on him. This spirited and formidable young fellow seems to have taken for his motto the old maxim, that ‘ there are three things necessary to success in life—*Impudence ! Impudence ! Impudence !* ’ It is so in matters of opinion, but not in the **FANCY**, which is the most practical of all things, though even here confidence is half the battle, but only half. Our friend had vapoured and swaggered too much, as if he wanted to grin and bully his adversary out of the fight. ‘ Alas ! the Bristol man was not so tamed ! ’—‘ This is *the grave-digger* ’ (would Tom Hickman exclaim in the moments of intoxication from gin and success, shewing his tremendous right hand), ‘ this will send many of them to their long homes ; I haven’t done with them yet ! ’ Why should he—though he had licked four of the best men within the hour, yet why should he threaten to inflict dishonourable chastisement on my old master Richmond, a veteran going off the stage, and who has borne his sable honours meekly ? Magnanimity, my dear Tom, and bravery, should be inseparable. Or why should he go up to his antagonist, the first time he ever saw him at the Fives Court, and measuring him from head to foot with a glance of contempt, as Achilles surveyed Hector, say to him, ‘ What, are you Bill Neate ? I’ll knock more blood out of that great carcase of thine, this day fortnight, than you ever knock’d out of a bullock’s ! ’ It was not manly, ’twas not fighter-like. If he was sure of the victory (as he was not), the less said about it the better. Modesty should accompany the **FANCY** as its shadow. The best men were always the best behaved. Jem Belcher, the Game Chicken (before whom the Gas-man could not have lived) were civil, silent men. So is Cribb, so is Tom Belcher, the most elegant of sparrers, and not a man for every one to take by the nose. I enlarged on this topic in the mail (while



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Turtle was asleep), and said very wisely (as I thought) that impertinence was a part of no profession. A boxer was bound to beat his man, but not to thrust his fist, either actually or by implication, in every one's face. Even a highwayman, in the way of trade, may blow out your brains, but if he uses foul language at the same time, I should say he was no gentleman. A boxer, I would infer, need not be a blackguard or a coxcomb, more than another. Perhaps I press this point too much on a fallen man—Mr. Thomas Hickman has by this time learnt that first of all lessons, 'That man was made to mourn.' He has lost nothing by the late fight but his presumption; and that every man may do as well without! By an over-display of this quality, however, the public had been prejudiced against him, and the *knowing-ones* were taken in. Few but those who had bet on him wished Gas to win. With my own prepossessions on the subject, the result of the 11th of December appeared to me as fine a piece of poetical justice as I had ever witnessed. The difference of weight between the two combatants (14 stone to 12) was nothing to the sporting men. Great, heavy, clumsy, long-armed Bill Neate kicked the beam in the scale of the Gas-man's vanity. The amateurs were frightened at his big words, and thought that they would make up for the difference of six feet and five feet nine. Truly, the FANCY are not men of imagination. They judge of what has been, and cannot conceive of any thing that is to be. The Gas-man had won hitherto; therefore he must beat a man half as big again as himself—and that to a certainty. Besides, there are as many feuds, factions, prejudices, pedantic notions in the FANCY as in the state or in the schools. Mr. Gully is almost the only cool, sensible man among them, who exercises an unbiassed discretion, and is not a slave to his passions in these matters. But enough of reflections, and to our tale. The day, as I have said, was fine for a December morning. The grass was wet, and the ground miry, and ploughed up with multitudinous feet, except that, within the ring itself, there was a spot of virgin-green closed in and unprofaned by vulgar tread, that shone with dazzling brightness in the mid-day sun. For it was now noon, and we had an hour to wait. This is the trying time. It is then the heart sickens, as you think what the two champions are about, and how short a time will determine their fate. After the first blow is struck, there is no opportunity for nervous apprehensions; you are swallowed up in the immediate interest of the scene—but

'Between the acting of a dreadful thing  
And the first motion, all the interim is  
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream.'

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I found it so as I felt the sun's rays clinging to my back, and saw the white wintry clouds sink below the verge of the horizon. 'So,' I thought, 'my fairest hopes have faded from my sight!—so will the Gas-man's glory, or that of his adversary, vanish in an hour.' The *swells* were parading in their white box-coats, the outer ring was cleared with some bruises on the heads and shins of the rustic assembly (for the *cockneys* had been distanced by the sixty-six miles); the time drew near, I had got a good stand; a bustle, a buzz, ran through the crowd, and from the opposite side entered Neate, between his second and bottle-holder. He rolled along, swathed in his loose great coat, his knock-knees bending under his huge bulk; and, with a modest cheerful air, threw his hat into the ring. He then just looked round, and began quietly to undress; when from the other side there was a similar rush and an opening made, and the Gas-man came forward with a conscious air of anticipated triumph, too much like the cock-of-the-walk. He strutted about more than became a hero, sucked oranges with a supercilious air, and threw away the skin with a toss of his head, and went up and looked at Neate, which was an act of supererogation. The only sensible thing he did was, as he strode away from the modern Ajax, to fling out his arms, as if he wanted to try whether they would do their work that day. By this time they had stripped, and presented a strong contrast in appearance. If Neate was like Ajax, 'with Atlantean shoulders, fit to bear' the pugilistic reputation of all Bristol, Hickman might be compared to Diomed, light, vigorous, elastic, and his back glistened in the sun, as he moved about, like a panther's hide. There was now a dead pause—attention was awe-struck. Who at that moment, big with a great event, did not draw his breath short—did not feel his heart throb? All was ready. They tossed up for the sun, and the Gas-man won. They were led up to the *scratch*—shook hands, and went at it.

In the first round every one thought it was all over. After making play a short time, the Gas-man flew at his adversary like a tiger, struck five blows in as many seconds, three first, and then following him as he staggered back, two more, right and left, and down he fell, a mighty ruin. There was a shout, and I said, 'There is no standing this.' Neate seemed like a lifeless lump of flesh and bone, round which the Gas-man's blows played with the rapidity of electricity or lightning, and you imagined he would only be lifted up to be knocked down again. It was as if Hickman held a sword or a fire in that right hand of his, and directed it against an unarmed body. They met again, and Neate seemed, not cowed, but particularly cautious. I saw his teeth clenched together and his brows knit close

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against the sun. He held out both his arms at full length straight before him, like two sledge-hammers, and raised his left an inch or two higher. The Gas-man could not get over this guard—they struck mutually and fell, but without advantage on either side. It was the same in the next round; but the balance of power was thus restored—the fate of the battle was suspended. No one could tell how it would end. This was the only moment in which opinion was divided; for, in the next, the Gas-man aiming a mortal blow at his adversary's neck, with his right hand, and failing from the length he had to reach, the other returned it with his left at full swing, planted a tremendous blow on his cheek-bone and eyebrow, and made a red ruin of that side of his face. The Gas-man went down, and there was another shout—a roar of triumph as the waves of fortune rolled tumultuously from side to side. This was a settler. Hickman got up, and 'grinned horrible a ghastly smile,' yet he was evidently dashed in his opinion of himself; it was the first time he had ever been so punished; all one side of his face was perfect scarlet, and his right eye was closed in dingy blackness, as he advanced to the fight, less confident, but still determined. After one or two rounds, not receiving another such remembrancer, he rallied and went at it with his former impetuosity. But in vain. His strength had been weakened,—his blows could not tell at such a distance,—he was obliged to fling himself at his adversary, and could not strike from his feet; and almost as regularly as he flew at him with his right hand, Neate warded the blow, or drew back out of its reach, and felled him with the return of his left. There was little cautious sparring—no half-hits—no tapping and trifling, none of the *petit-maîtres*hip of the art—they were almost all knock-down blows:—the fight was a good stand up fight. The wonder was the half-minute time. If there had been a minute or more allowed between each round, it would have been intelligible how they should by degrees recover strength and resolution; but to see two men smashed to the ground, smeared with gore, stunned, senseless, the breath beaten out of their bodies; and then, before you recover from the shock, to see them rise up with new strength and courage, stand steady to inflict or receive mortal offence, and rush upon each other 'like two clouds over the Caspian'—this is the most astonishing thing of all:—this is the high and heroic state of man! From this time forward the event became more certain every round; and about the twelfth it seemed as if it must have been over. Hickman generally stood with his back to me; but in the scuffle, he had changed positions, and Neate just then made a tremendous lunge at him, and hit him full in the face. It was doubtful whether he would fall backwards or

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forwards; he hung suspended for a second or two, and then fell back, throwing his hands in the air, and with his face lifted up to the sky. I never saw any thing more terrific than his aspect just before he fell. All traces of life, of natural expression, were gone from him. His face was like a human skull, a death's head, spouting blood. The eyes were filled with blood, the nose streamed with blood, the mouth gaped blood. He was not like an actual man, but like a preternatural, spectral appearance, or like one of the figures in Dante's *Inferno*. Yet he fought on after this for several rounds, still striking the first desperate blow, and Neate standing on the defensive, and using the same cautious guard to the last, as if he had still all his work to do; and it was not till the Gas-man was so stunned in the seventeenth or eighteenth round, that his senses forsook him, and he could not come to time, that the battle was declared over.<sup>1</sup> Ye who despise the FANCY, do something to shew as much *pluck*, or as much self-possession as this, before you assume a superiority which you have never given a single proof of by any one action in the whole course of your lives!—When the Gas-man came to himself, the first words he uttered were, 'Where am I? What is the matter?' 'Nothing is the matter, Tom,—you have lost the battle, but you are the bravest man alive.' And Jackson whispered to him, 'I am collecting a purse for you, Tom.'—Vain sounds, and unheard at that moment! Neate instantly went up and shook him cordially by the hand, and seeing some old acquaintance, began to flourish with his fists, calling out, 'Ah, you always said I couldn't fight—What do you think now?' But all in good humour, and without any appearance of arrogance; only it was evident Bill Neate was pleased that he had won the fight. When it was over, I asked Cribb if he did not think it was a good one? He said, '*Pretty well!*' The carrier-pigeons now mounted into the air, and one of them flew with the news of her husband's victory to the bosom of Mrs. Neate. Alas, for Mrs. Hickman!

*Mais au revoir*, as Sir Fopling Flutter says. I went down with Toms; I returned with Jack Pigott, whom I met on the ground. Toms is a rattle-brain; Pigott is a sentimentalist. Now, under favour, I am a sentimentalist too—therefore I say nothing, but that the interest of the excursion did not flag as I came back. Pigott and I marched along the causeway leading from Hungerford to New-

<sup>1</sup> Scroggins said of the Gas-man, that he thought he was a man of that courage, that if his hands were cut off, he would still fight on with the stumps—like that of Widdrington,—

———'In doleful dumps,  
Who, when his legs were smitten off  
Still fought upon his stumps.'

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bury, now observing the effect of a brilliant sun on the tawny meads or moss-coloured cottages, now exulting in the fight, now digressing to some topic of general and elegant literature. My friend was dressed in character for the occasion, or like one of the FANCY; that is, with a double portion of great coats, clogs, and overhauls: and just as we had agreed with a couple of country-lads to carry his superfluous wearing-apparel to the next town, we were overtaken by a return post-chaise, into which I got, Pigott preferring a seat on the bar. There were two strangers already in the chaise, and on their observing they supposed I had been to the fight, I said I had, and concluded they had done the same. They appeared, however, a little shy and sore on the subject; and it was not till after several hints dropped, and questions put, that it turned out that they had missed it. One of these friends had undertaken to drive the other there in his gig: they had set out, to make sure work, the day before at three in the afternoon. The owner of the one-horse vehicle scorned to ask his way, and drove right on to Bagshot, instead of turning off at Hounslow: there they stopped all night, and set off the next day across the country to Reading, from whence they took coach, and got down within a mile or two of Hungerford, just half an hour after the fight was over. This might be safely set down as one of the miseries of human life. We parted with these two gentlemen who had been to see the fight, but had returned as they went, at Wolhampton, where we were promised beds (an irresistible temptation, for Pigott had passed the preceding night at Hungerford as we had done at Newbury), and we turned into an old bow-windowed parlour with a carpet and a snug fire; and after devouring a quantity of tea, toast, and eggs, sat down to consider, during an hour of philosophic leisure, what we should have for supper. In the midst of an Epicurean deliberation between a roasted fowl and mutton chops with mashed potatoes, we were interrupted by an inroad of Goths and Vandals—*O procul este profani*—not real flash-men, but interlopers, noisy pretenders, butchers from Tothill-fields, brokers from Whitechapel, who called immediately for pipes and tobacco, hoping it would not be disagreeable to the gentlemen, and began to insist that it was a *cross*. Pigott withdrew from the smoke and noise into another room, and left me to dispute the point with them for a couple of hours *sans intermission* by the dial. The next morning we rose refreshed; and on observing that Jack had a pocket volume in his hand, in which he read in the intervals of our discourse, I inquired what it was, and learned to my particular satisfaction that it was a volume of the *New Eloise*. Ladies, after this, will you contend that a love for the FANCY is incompatible with the cultivation

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of sentiment?—We jogged on as before, my friend setting me up in a genteel drab great coat and green silk handkerchief (which I must say became me exceedingly), and after stretching our legs for a few miles, and seeing Jack Randall, Ned Turner, and Scroggins, pass on the top of one of the Bath coaches, we engaged with the driver of the second to take us to London for the usual fee. I got inside, and found three other passengers. One of them was an old gentleman with an aquiline nose, powdered hair, and a pigtail, and who looked as if he had played many a rubber at the Bath rooms. I said to myself, he is very like Mr. Windham; I wish he would enter into conversation, that I might hear what fine observations would come from those finely-turned features. However, nothing passed, till, stopping to dine at Reading, some inquiry was made by the company about the fight, and I gave (as the reader may believe) an eloquent and animated description of it. When we got into the coach again, the old gentleman, after a graceful exordium, said, he had, when a boy, been to a fight between the famous Broughton and George Stevenson, who was called the *Fighting Coachman*, in the year 1770, with the late Mr. Windham. This beginning flattered the spirit of prophecy within me and rivetted my attention. He went on—‘George Stevenson was coachman to a friend of my father’s. He was an old man when I saw him some years afterwards. He took hold of his own arm and said, “there was muscle here once, but now it is no more than this young gentleman’s.” He added, “Well, no matter; I have been here long, I am willing to go hence, and I hope I have done no more harm than another man.” Once,’ said my unknown companion, ‘I asked him if he had ever beat Broughton? He said Yes; that he had fought with him three times, and the last time he fairly beat him, though the world did not allow it. “I’ll tell you how it was, master. When the seconds lifted us up in the last round, we were so exhausted that neither of us could stand, and we fell upon one another, and as Master Broughton fell uppermost, the mob gave it in his favour, and he was said to have won the battle. But,” says he, “the fact was, that as his second (John Cuthbert) lifted him up, he said to him, ‘I’ll fight no more, I’ve had enough;’ which,” says Stevenson, “you know gave me the victory. And to prove to you that this was the case, when John Cuthbert was on his death-bed, and they asked him if there was any thing on his mind which he wished to confess, he answered, ‘Yes, that there was one thing he wished to set right, for that certainly Master Stevenson won that last fight with Master Broughton; for he whispered him as he lifted him up in the last round of all, that he had had enough.’”’ ‘This,’ said the Bath gentleman, ‘was a bit of human nature;’ and I

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have written this account of the fight on purpose that it might not be lost to the world. He also stated as a proof of the candour of mind in this class of men, that Stevenson acknowledged that Broughton could have beat him in his best day; but that he (Broughton) was getting old in their last rencounter. When we stopped in Piccadilly, I wanted to ask the gentleman some questions about the late Mr. Windham, but had not courage. I got out, resigned my coat and green silk handkerchief to Pigott (loth to part with these ornaments of life), and walked home in high spirits.

P.S. Toms called upon me the next day, to ask me if I did not think the fight was a complete thing? I said I thought it was. I hope he will relish my account of it.

### ESSAY IX

#### ON THE CONDUCT OF LIFE; OR, ADVICE TO A SCHOOLBOY

MY DEAR LITTLE FELLOW,—You are now going to settle at school, and may consider this as your first entrance into the world. As my health is so indifferent, and I may not be with you long, I wish to leave you some advice (the best I can) for your conduct in life, both that it may be of use to you, and as something to remember me by. I may at least be able to caution you against my own errors, if nothing else.

As we went along to your new place of destination, you often repeated that ‘You durst say they were a set of stupid, disagreeable people,’ meaning the people at the school. You were to blame in this. It is a good old rule to hope for the best. Always, my dear, believe things to be right, till you find them the contrary; and even then, instead of irritating yourself against them, endeavour to put up with them as well as you can, if you cannot alter them. You said ‘You were sure you should not like the school where you were going.’ This was wrong. What you meant was that you did not like to leave home. But you could not tell whether you should like the school or not, till you had given it a trial. Otherwise, your saying that you should not like it was determining that you would not like it. Never anticipate evils; or, because you cannot have things exactly as you wish, make them out worse than they are, through mere spite and wilfulness.

You seemed at first to take no notice of your school-fellows, or rather to set yourself against them, because they were strangers to

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you. They knew as little of you as you did of them ; so that this would have been a reason for their keeping aloof from you as well, which you would have felt as a hardship. Learn never to conceive a prejudice against others, because you know nothing of them. It is bad reasoning, and makes enemies of half the world. Do not think ill of them, till they behave ill to you ; and then strive to avoid the faults which you see in them. This will disarm their hostility sooner than pique or resentment or complaint.

I thought you were disposed to criticise the dress of some of the boys as not so good as your own. Never despise any one for any thing that he cannot help—least of all, for his poverty. I would wish you to keep up appearances yourself as a defence against the idle sneers of the world, but I would not have you value yourself upon them. I hope you will neither be the dupe nor victim of vulgar prejudices. Instead of saying above—‘Never despise any one for any thing that he cannot help’—I might have said, ‘Never despise any one at all ;’ for contempt implies a triumph over and pleasure in the ill of another. It means that you are glad and congratulate yourself on their failings or misfortunes. The sense of inferiority in others, without this indirect appeal to our self-love, is a painful feeling, and not an exulting one.

You complain since, that the boys laugh at you and do not care about you, and that you are not treated as you were at home. My dear, that is one chief reason for your being sent to school, to inure you betimes to the unavoidable rubs and uncertain reception you may meet with in life. You cannot always be with me, and perhaps it is as well that you cannot. But you must not expect others to shew the same concern about you as I should. You have hitherto been a spoiled child, and have been used to have your own way a good deal, both in the house and among your play-fellows, with whom you were too fond of being a leader : but you have good-nature and good sense, and will get the better of this in time. You have now got among other boys who are your equals, or bigger and stronger than yourself, and who have something else to attend to besides humouring your whims and fancies, and you feel this as a repulse or piece of injustice. But the first lesson to learn is that there are other people in the world besides yourself. There are a number of boys in the school where you are, whose amusements and pursuits (whatever they may be) are and ought to be of as much consequence to them as yours can be to you, and to which therefore you must give way in your turn. The more airs of childish self-importance you give yourself, you will only expose yourself to be the more thwarted and laughed at. True equality is the only true morality or true wisdom. Remember always



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that you are but one among others, and you can hardly mistake your place in society. In your father's house, you might do as you pleased : in the world, you will find competitors at every turn. You are not born a king's son to destroy or dictate to millions : you can only expect to share their fate, or settle your differences amicably with them. You already find it so at school ; and I wish you to be reconciled to your situation as soon and with as little pain as you can.

It was my misfortune (perhaps) to be bred up among Dissenters, who look with too jaundiced an eye at others, and set too high a value on their own peculiar pretensions. From being proscribed themselves, they learn to proscribe others ; and come in the end to reduce all integrity of principle and soundness of opinion within the pale of their own little communion. Those who were out of it and did not belong to the class of *Rational Dissenters*, I was led erroneously to look upon as hardly deserving the name of rational beings. Being thus satisfied as to the select few who are 'the salt of the earth,' it is easy to persuade ourselves that we are at the head of them, and to fancy ourselves of more importance in the scale of true desert than all the rest of the world put together, who do not interpret a certain text of Scripture in the manner that we have been taught to do. You will (from the difference of education) be free from this bigotry, and will, I hope, avoid every thing akin to the same exclusive and narrow-minded spirit. Think that the minds of men are various as their faces—that the modes and employments of life are numberless as they are necessary—that there is more than one class of merit—that though others may be wrong in some things, they are not so in all—and that countless races of men have been born, have lived and died without ever hearing of any one of those points in which you take a just pride and pleasure—and you will not err on the side of that spiritual pride or intellectual coxcombry which has been so often the bane of the studious and learned !

I observe you have got a way of speaking of your school-fellows as '*that Hoare, that Harris*,' and so on, as if you meant to mark them out for particular reprobation, or did not think them good enough for you. It is a bad habit to speak disrespectfully of others : for it will lead you to think and feel uncharitably towards them. Ill names beget ill blood. Even where there may be some repeated trifling provocation, it is better to be courteous, mild, and forbearing, than captious, impatient, and fretful. The faults of others too often arise out of our own ill-temper ; or though they should be real, we shall not mend them, by exasperating ourselves against them. Treat your playmates, as Hamlet advises Polonius to treat the players, 'according to your own dignity, rather than their deserts.' If you fly out at

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every thing in them that you disapprove or think done on purpose to annoy you, you lie constantly at the mercy of their caprice, rudeness, or ill-nature. You should be more your own master.

Do not begin to quarrel with the world too soon : for, bad as it may be, it is the best we have to live in—here. If railing would have made it better, it would have been reformed long ago : but as this is not to be hoped for at present, the best way is to slide through it as contentedly and innocently as we may. The worst fault it has, is want of charity : and calling *knave* and *fool* at every turn will not cure this failing. Consider (as a matter of vanity) that if there were not so many knaves and fools as we find, the wise and honest would not be those rare and shining characters that they are allowed to be ; and (as a matter of philosophy) that if the world be really incorrigible in this respect, it is a reflection to make one sad, not angry. We may laugh or weep at the madness of mankind : we have no right to vilify them, for our own sakes or theirs. Misanthropy is not the disgust of the mind at human nature, but with itself ; or it is laying its own exaggerated vices and foul blots at the door of others ! Do not, however, mistake what I have here said. I would not have you, when you grow up, adopt the low and sordid fashion of palliating existing abuses or of putting the best face upon the worst things. I only mean that indiscriminate, unqualified satire can do little good, and that those who indulge in the most revolting speculations on human nature, do not themselves always set the fairest examples, or strive to prevent its lower degradation. They seem rather willing to reduce it to their theoretical standard. For the rest, the very outcry that is made (if sincere) shews that things cannot be quite so bad as they are represented. The abstract hatred and scorn of vice implies the capacity for virtue : the impatience expressed at the most striking instances of deformity proves the innate idea and love of beauty in the human mind. The best antidote I can recommend to you hereafter against the disheartening effect of such writings as those of Rochefoucault, Mandeville, and others, will be to look at the pictures of Raphael and Correggio. You need not be altogether ashamed, my dear little boy, of belonging to a species which could produce such faces as those ; nor despair of doing something worthy of a laudable ambition, when you see what such hands have wrought ! You will, perhaps, one day have reason to thank me for this advice.

As to your studies and school-exercises, I wish you to learn Latin, French, and dancing. I would insist upon the last more particularly, both because it is more likely to be neglected, and because it is of the greatest consequence to your success in life. Every thing almost depends upon first impressions ; and these depend (besides *person*,

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which is not in our power) upon two things, *dress* and *address*, which every one may command with proper attention. These are the small coin in the intercourse of life, which are continually in request; and perhaps you will find at the year's end, or towards the close of life, that the daily insults, coldness, or contempt, to which you have been exposed by a neglect of such superficial recommendations, are hardly atoned for by the few proofs of esteem or admiration which your integrity or talents have been able to extort in the course of it. When we habitually disregard those things which we know will ensure the favourable opinion of others, it shews we set that opinion at defiance, or consider ourselves above it, which no one ever did with impunity. An inattention to our own persons implies a disrespect to others, and may often be traced no less to a want of good-nature than of good sense. The old maxim—*Desire to please, and you will infallibly please*—explains the whole matter. If there is a tendency to vanity and affectation on this side of the question, there is an equal alloy of pride and obstinacy on the opposite one. Slovenliness may at any time be cured by an effort of resolution, but a graceful carriage requires an early habit, and in most cases the aid of the dancing-master. I would not have you, from not knowing how to enter a room properly, stumble at the very threshold in the good graces of those on whom it is possible the fate of your future life may depend. Nothing creates a greater prejudice against any one than awkwardness. A person who is confused in manner and gesture seems to have done something wrong, or as if he was conscious of no one qualification to build a confidence in himself upon. On the other hand, openness, freedom, self-possession, set others at ease with you by shewing that you are on good terms with yourself. Grace in women gains the affections sooner, and secures them longer, than any thing else—it is an outward and visible sign of an inward harmony of soul—as the want of it in men, as if the mind and body equally hitched in difficulties and were distracted with doubts, is the greatest impediment in the career of gallantry and road to the female heart. Another thing I would caution you against is not to pore over your books till you are bent almost double—a habit you will never be able to get the better of, and which you will find of serious ill consequence. *A stoop in the shoulders* sinks a man in public and in private estimation. You are at present straight enough, and you walk with boldness and spirit. Do nothing to take away the use of your limbs, or the spring and elasticity of your muscles. As to all worldly advantages, it is to the full of as much importance that your deportment should be erect and manly as your actions.

You will naturally find out all this and fall into it, if your attention

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is drawn out sufficiently to what is passing around you ; and this will be the case, unless you are absorbed too much in books and those sedentary studies,

‘ Which waste the marrow, and consume the brain.’

You are, I think, too fond of reading as it is. As one means of avoiding excess in this way, I would wish you to make it a rule, never to read at meal-times, nor in company when there is any (even the most trivial) conversation going on, nor ever to let your eagerness to learn encroach upon your play-hours. Books are but one inlet of knowledge ; and the pores of the mind, like those of the body, should be left open to all impressions. I applied too close to my studies, soon after I was of your age, and hurt myself irreparably by it. Whatever may be the value of learning, health and good spirits are of more.

I would have you, as I said, make yourself master of French, because you may find it of use in the commerce of life ; and I would have you learn Latin, partly because I learnt it myself, and I would not have you without any of the advantages or sources of knowledge that I possessed—it would be a bar of separation between us—and secondly, because there is an atmosphere round this sort of classical ground, to which that of actual life is gross and vulgar. Shut out from this garden of early sweetness, we may well exclaim—

‘ How shall we part and wander down  
Into a lower world, to this obscure  
And wild ? How shall we breathe in other air  
Less pure, accustom'd to immortal fruits ? ’

I do not think the Classics so indispensable to the cultivation of your intellect as on another account, which I have seen explained elsewhere, and you will have no objection to turn with me to the passage.

‘ The study of the Classics is less to be regarded as an exercise of the intellect, than as a *discipline of humanity*. The peculiar advantage of this mode of education consists not so much in strengthening the understanding, as in softening and refining the taste. It gives men liberal views ; it accustoms the mind to take an interest in things foreign to itself ; to love virtue for its own sake ; to prefer fame to life, and glory to riches ; and to fix our thoughts on the remote and permanent, instead of narrow and fleeting objects. It teaches us to believe that there is something really great and excellent in the world, surviving all the shocks of accident and fluctuations of opinion, and raises us above that low and servile fear, which bows only to present power and upstart authority. Rome and Athens filled a place in the history of mankind, which can never be occupied again.

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They were two cities set on a hill, which could not be hid ; all eyes have seen them, and their light shines like a mighty sea-mark into the abyss of time.

“ Still green with bays each ancient altar stands,  
Above the reach of sacrilegious hands ;  
Secure from flames, from envy's fiercer rage,  
Destructive war, and all-involving age.  
Hail, bards triumphant, born in happier days,  
Immortal heirs of universal praise !  
Whose honours with increase of ages grow,  
As streams roll down, enlarging as they flow ! ”

It is this feeling more than any thing else which produces a marked difference between the study of the ancient and modern languages, and which, by the weight and importance of the consequences attached to the former, stamps every word with a monumental firmness. By conversing with the *mighty dead*, we imbibe sentiment with knowledge. We become strongly attached to those who can no longer either hurt or serve us, except through the influence which they exert over the mind. We feel the presence of that power which gives immortality to human thoughts and actions, and catch the flame of enthusiasm from all nations and ages.

Because, however, you have learnt Latin and Greek, and can speak a different language, do not fancy yourself of a different order of beings from those you ordinarily converse with. They perhaps know and can do more *things* than you, though you have learnt a greater variety of *names* to express the same thing by. The great object indeed of these studies is to be ‘ a cure for a narrow and selfish spirit,’ and to carry the mind out of its petty and local prejudices to the idea of a more general humanity. Do not fancy, because you are intimate with Homer and Virgil, that your neighbours who can never attain the same posthumous fame are to be despised, like those impudent valets who live in noble families and look down upon every one else. Though you are master of Cicero's *Orations*, think it possible for a cobbler at a stall to be more eloquent than you. ‘ But you are a scholar, and he is not.’ Well, then, you have that advantage over him, but it does not follow that you are to have every other. Look at the heads of the celebrated poets and philosophers of antiquity in the collection at Wilton, and you will say they answer to their works : but you will find others in the same collection whose names have hardly come down to us, that are equally fine, and cast in the same classic mould. Do you imagine that all the thoughts, genius, and capacity of those old and mighty nations are contained in a few odd volumes, to be thumbed by school-boys ? This reflection

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is not meant to lessen your admiration of the great names to which you will be accustomed to look up, but to direct it to that solid mass of intellect and power, of which they were the most shining ornaments. I would wish you to excel in this sort of learning and to take a pleasure in it, because it is the path that has been chosen for you : but do not suppose that others do not excel equally in their line of study or exercise of skill, or that there is but one mode of excellence in art or nature. You have got on vastly beyond the point at which you set out ; but others have been getting on as well as you in the same or other ways, and have kept pace with you. What then, you may ask, is the use of all the pains you have taken, if it gives you no superiority over mankind in general ? It is this—You have reaped all the benefit of improvement and knowledge yourself ; and farther, if you had not moved forwards, you would by this time have been left behind. Envy no one, disparage no one, think yourself above no one. Their demerits will not piece out your deficiencies ; nor is it a waste of time and labour for you to cultivate your own talents, because you cannot bespeak a monopoly of all advantages. You are more learned than many of your acquaintance who may be more active, healthy, witty, successful in business or expert in some elegant or useful art than you ; but you have no reason to complain, if you have attained the object of your ambition. Or if you should not be able to compass this from a want of genius or parts, yet learn, my child, to be contented with a mediocrity of acquirements. You may still be respectable in your conduct, and enjoy a tranquil obscurity, with more friends and fewer enemies than you might otherwise have had.

There is one almost certain drawback on a course of scholastic study, that it unfits men for active life. The *ideal* is always at variance with the *practical*. The habit of fixing the attention on the imaginary and abstracted deprives the mind equally of energy and fortitude. By indulging our imaginations on fictions and chimeras, where we have it all our own way and are led on only by the pleasure of the prospect, we grow fastidious, effeminate, lapped in idle luxury, impatient of contradiction, and unable to sustain the shock of real adversity, when it comes ; as by being taken up with abstract reasoning or remote events in which we are merely passive spectators, we have no resources to provide against it, no readiness, or expedients for the occasion, or spirit to use them, even if they occur. We must think again before we determine, and thus the opportunity for action is lost. While we are considering the very best possible mode of gaining an object, we find that it has slipped through our fingers, or that others have laid rude, fearless hands upon it. The youthful tyro reluctantly discovers that the ways of the world are not his ways, nor

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their thoughts his thoughts. Perhaps the old monastic institutions were not in this respect unwise, which carried on to the end of life the secluded habits and romantic associations with which it began, and which created a privileged world for the inhabitants, distinct from the common world of men and women. You will bring with you from your books and solitary reveries a wrong measure of men and things, unless you correct it by careful experience and mixed observation. You will raise your standard of character as much too high at first as from disappointed expectation it will sink too low afterwards. The best qualifier of this theoretical *mania* and of the dreams of poets and moralists (who both treat of things as *they ought to be* and not as *they are*) is in one sense to be found in some of our own popular writers, such as our Novelists and periodical Essayists. But you had, after all, better wait and see what things are than try to anticipate the results. You know more of a road by having travelled it than by all the conjectures and descriptions in the world. You will find the business of life conducted on a much more varied and individual scale than you would expect. People will be concerned about a thousand things that you have no idea of, and will be utterly indifferent to what you feel the greatest interest in. You will find good and evil, folly and discretion more mingled, and the shades of character running more into each other than they do in the ethical charts. No one is equally wise or guarded at all points, and it is seldom that any one is quite a fool. Do not be surprised, when you go out into the world, to find men talk exceedingly well on different subjects, who do not derive their information immediately from books. In the first place, the light of books is diffused very much abroad in the world in conversation and at second-hand; and besides, common sense is not a monopoly, and experience and observation are sources of information open to the man of the world as well as to the retired student. If you know more of the outline and principles, he knows more of the details and 'practique part of life.' A man may discuss the adventures of a campaign in which he was engaged very agreeably without having read the *Retreat of the Ten Thousand*, or give a singular account of the method of drying teas in China without being a profound chemist. It is the vice of scholars to suppose that there is no knowledge in the world but that of books. Do you avoid it, I conjure you; and thereby save yourself the pain and mortification that must otherwise ensue from finding out your mistake continually!

Gravity is one great ingredient in the conduct of life, and perhaps a certain share of it is hardly to be dispensed with. Few people can afford to be quite unaffected. At any rate, do not put your worst qualities foremost. Do not seek to distinguish yourself by being

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ridiculous ; nor entertain that miserable ambition to be the sport and butt of the company. By aiming at a certain standard of behaviour or intellect, you will at least show your taste and value for what is excellent. There are those who *blurt* out their good things with so little heed of what they are about that no one thinks any thing of them ; as others by keeping their folly to themselves gain the reputation of wisdom. Do not, however, affect to speak only in oracles, or to deal in *bon-mots* : condescend to the level of the company, and be free and accessible to all persons. Express whatever occurs to you, that cannot offend others or hurt yourself. Keep some opinions to yourself. Say what you please of others, but never repeat what you hear said of them to themselves. If you have nothing to offer yourself, laugh with the witty, assent to the wise ; they will not think the worse of you for it. Listen to information on subjects you are unacquainted with, instead of always striving to lead the conversation to some favourite one of your own. By the last method you will shine, but will not improve. I am ashamed myself ever to open my lips on any question I have ever written upon. It is much more difficult to be able to converse on an equality with a number of persons in turn, than to soar above their heads, and excite the stupid gaze of all companies by bestriding some senseless topic of your own and confounding the understandings of those who are ignorant of it. Be not too fond of argument. Indeed, by going much into company (which I do not, however, wish you to do) you will be weaned from this practice, if you set out with it. Rather suggest what remarks may have occurred to you on a subject than aim at dictating your opinions to others or at defending yourself at all points. You will learn more by agreeing in the main with others and entering into their trains of thinking, than by contradicting and urging them to extremities. Avoid singularity of opinion as well as of everything else. Sound conclusions come with practical knowledge, rather than with speculative refinements : in what we really understand, we reason but little. Long-winded disputes fill up the place of common sense and candid inquiry. Do not imagine that you will make people friends by shewing your superiority over them : it is what they will neither admit nor forgive, unless you have a high and acknowledged reputation beforehand, which renders this sort of petty vanity more inexcusable. Seek to gain the good-will of others, rather than to extort their applause ; and to this end, be neither too tenacious of your own claims, nor inclined to press too hard on their weaknesses.

Do not affect the society of your inferiors in rank, nor court that of the great. There can be no real sympathy in either case. The



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first will consider you as a restraint upon them, and the last as an intruder or *upon sufferance*. It is not a desirable distinction to be admitted into company as a man of talents. You are a mark for invidious observation. If you say nothing or merely behave with common propriety and simplicity, you seem to have no business there. If you make a studied display of yourself, it is arrogating a consequence you have no right to. If you are contented to pass as an indifferent person, they despise you; if you distinguish yourself, and shew more knowledge, wit, or taste than they do, they hate you for it. You have no alternative. I would rather be asked out to sing than to talk. Every one does not pretend to a fine voice, but every one fancies he has as much understanding as another. Indeed, the secret of this sort of intercourse has been pretty well found out. Literary men are seldom invited to the tables of the great; they send for players and musicians, as they keep monkeys and parrots!

I would not, however, have you run away with a notion that the rich are knaves or that lords are fools. They are for what I know as honest and as wise as other people. But it is a trick of our self-love, supposing that another has the decided advantage of us in one way, to strike a balance by taking it for granted (as a moral antithesis) that he must be as much beneath us in those qualities on which we plume ourselves, and which we would appropriate almost entirely to our own use. It is hard indeed if others are raised above us not only by the gifts of fortune, but of understanding too. It is not to be credited. People have an unwillingness to admit that the House of Lords can be equal in talent to the House of Commons. So in the other sex, if a woman is handsome, she is an idiot or no better than she should be: in ours, if a man is worth a million of money, he is a miser, a fellow that cannot spell his own name, or a poor creature in some way, to bring him to our level. This is malice, and not truth. Believe all the good you can of every one. Do not measure others by yourself. If they have advantages which you have not, let your liberality keep pace with their good fortune. Envy no one, and you need envy no one. If you have but the magnanimity to allow merit wherever you see it—understanding in a lord or wit in a cobbler—this temper of mind will stand you instead of many accomplishments. Think no man too happy. Raphael died young. Milton had the misfortune to be blind. If any one is vain or proud, it is from folly or ignorance. Those who pique themselves excessively on some one thing, have but that one thing to pique themselves upon, as languages, mechanics, &c. I do not say that this is not an enviable delusion where it is not liable to be disturbed; but at present knowledge is too much diffused and pretensions come too much into collision for this

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to be long the case; and it is better not to form such a prejudice at first than to have it to undo all the rest of one's life. If you learn any two things, though they may put you out of conceit one with the other, they will effectually cure you of any conceit you might have of yourself, by shewing the variety and scope there is in the human mind beyond the limits you had set to it.

You were convinced the first day that you could not learn Latin, which now you find easy. Be taught from this, not to think other obstacles insurmountable that you may meet with in the course of your life, though they seem so at first sight.

Attend above all things to your health; or rather, do nothing wilfully to impair it. Use exercise, abstinence, and regular hours. Drink water when you are alone, and wine or very little spirits in company. It is the last that are ruinous by leading to unlimited excess. There is not the same headlong *impetus* in wine. But one glass of brandy and water makes you want another, that other makes you want a third, and so on, in an increased proportion. Therefore no one can stop midway who does not possess the resolution to abstain altogether; for the inclination is sharpened with its indulgence. Never gamble. Or if you play for any thing, never do so for what will give you uneasiness the next day. Be not precise in these matters: but do not pass certain limits, which it is difficult to recover. Do nothing in the irritation of the moment, but take time to reflect. Because you have done one foolish thing, do not do another; nor throw away your health or reputation or comfort, to thwart impertinent advice. Avoid a spirit of contradiction, both in words and actions. Do not aim at what is beyond your reach, but at what is within it. Indulge in calm and pleasing pursuits, rather than violent excitements; and learn to conquer your own will, instead of striving to obtain the mastery of that of others.

With respect to your friends, I would wish you to choose them neither from caprice nor accident, and to adhere to them as long as you can. Do not take a surfeit of friendship, through over-sanguine enthusiasm, nor expect it to last for ever. Always speak well of those with whom you have once been intimate, or take some part of the censure you bestow on them to yourself. Never quarrel with tried friends, or those whom you wish to continue such. Wounds of this kind are sure to open again. When once the prejudice is removed that sheathes defects, familiarity only causes jealousy and distrust. Do not keep on with a mockery of friendship after the substance is gone—but part, while you can part friends. Bury the carcase of friendship: it is not worth embalming.

As to the books you will have to read by choice or for amuse-

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ment, the best are the commonest. The names of many of them are already familiar to you. Read them as you grow up with all the satisfaction in your power, and make much of them. It is perhaps the greatest pleasure you will have in life, the one you will think of longest, and repent of least. If my life had been more full of calamity than it has been (much more than I hope yours will be) I would live it over again, my poor little boy, to have read the books I did in my youth.

In politics I wish you to be an honest man, but no brawler. Hate injustice and falsehood for your own sake. Be neither a martyr, nor a sycophant. Wish well to the world without expecting to see it much better than it is; and do not gratify the enemies of liberty by putting yourself at their mercy, if it can be avoided with honour.

If you ever marry, I would wish you to marry the woman you like. Do not be guided by the recommendation of friends. Nothing will atone for or overcome an original distaste. It will only increase from intimacy; and if you are to live separate, it is better not to come together. There is no use in dragging a chain through life, unless it binds one to the object we love. Chuse a mistress from among your equals. You will be able to understand her character better, and she will be more likely to understand yours. Those in an inferior station to yourself will doubt your good intentions, and misapprehend your plainest expressions. All that you swear is to them a riddle or downright nonsense. You cannot by possibility translate your thoughts into their dialect. They will be ignorant of the meaning of half you say, and laugh at the rest. As mistresses, they will have no sympathy with you; and as wives, you can have none with them. But they will do all they can to thwart you, and to retrieve themselves in their own opinion by trick and low cunning. No woman ever married into a family above herself that did not try to make all the mischief she could in it.—Be not in haste to marry, nor to engage your affections, where there is no probability of a return. Do not fancy every woman you see the heroine of a romance, a Sophia Western, a Clarissa, or a Julia; and yourself the potential hero of it, Tom Jones, Lovelace, or St. Preux. Avoid this error as you would shrink back from a precipice. All your fine sentiments and romantic notions will (of themselves) make no more impression on one of these delicate creatures, than on a piece of marble. Their soft bosoms are steel to your amorous refinements, if you have no other pretensions. It is not what you think of them that determines their choice, but what they think of you. Endeavour, if you would escape lingering torments and the gnawing of the worm that dies not, to find out this, and to abide by the issue. We trifle

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with, make sport of, and despise those who are attached to us, and follow those that fly from us. 'We hunt the wind, we worship a statue, cry aloud to the desert.' Do you, my dear boy, stop short in this career, if you find yourself setting out in it, and make up your mind to this, that if a woman does not like you of her own accord, that is, from involuntary impressions, nothing you can say or do or suffer for her sake will make her, but will set her the more against you. So the song goes—

'Quit, quit for shame; this will not move :  
If of herself she will not love,  
Nothing will make her, the devil take her !'

'There is but one other point on which I meant to speak to you, and that is the choice of a profession. This, probably, had better be left to time or accident or your own inclination. You have a very fine ear, but I have somehow a prejudice against men-singers, and indeed against the stage altogether. It is an uncertain and ungrateful soil. All professions are bad that depend on reputation, which is 'as often got without merit as lost without deserving.' Yet I cannot easily reconcile myself to your being a slave to business, and I shall hardly be able to leave you an independence. A situation in a public office is secure, but laborious and mechanical, and without the two great springs of life, Hope and Fear. Perhaps, however, it might ensure you a competence, and leave you leisure for some other favourite amusement or pursuit. I have said all reputation is hazardous, hard to win, harder to keep. Many never attain a glimpse of what they have all their lives been looking for, and others survive a passing shadow of it. Yet if I were to name one pursuit rather than another, I should wish you to be a good painter, if such a thing could be hoped. I have failed in this myself, and should wish you to be able to do what I have not—to paint like Claude or Rembrandt or Guido or Vandyke, if it were possible. Artists, I think, who have succeeded in their chief object, live to be old, and are agreeable old men. Their minds keep alive to the last. Cosway's spirits never flagged till after ninety, and Nollekens, though nearly blind, passed all his mornings in giving directions about some group or bust in his workshop. You have seen Mr. —, that delightful specimen of the last age. With what avidity he takes up his pencil, or lays it down again to talk of numberless things ! His eye has not lost its lustre, nor 'paled its ineffectual fire.' His body is a shadow : he himself is a pure spirit. There is a kind of immortality about this sort of ideal and visionary existence that dallies with Fate and baffles the grim monster, Death. If I thought you could make as clever an

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artist and arrive at such an agreeable old age as Mr. —, I should declare at once for your devoting yourself to this enchanting profession; and in that reliance, should feel less regret at some of my own disappointments, and little anxiety on your account!

### ESSAY X

#### ON THE SCOTCH CHARACTER

##### A FRAGMENT

THE Scotch nation are a body-corporate. They hang together like a swarm of bees. I do not know how it may be among themselves, but with us they are all united as one man. They are not straggling individuals, but embodied, formidable abstractions—determined personifications of the land they come from. A Scotchman gets on in the world, because he is not one, but many. He moves in himself a host, drawn up in battle-array, and armed at all points against all impugners. He is a double existence—he stands for himself and his country. Every Scotchman is bond and surety for every other Scotchman—he thinks nothing Scotch foreign to him. If you see a Scotchman in the street, you may be almost sure it is another Scotchman—he is arm in arm with; and what is more, you may be sure they are talking of Scotchmen. Begin at the Arctic Circle, and they take Scotland in their way back. Plant the foot of the compasses in the meridian, and they turn it by degrees to ‘Edina’s darling seat’—true as the needle to the Pole. If you happen to say it is a high wind, they say there are high winds in Edinburgh. Should you mention Hampstead or Highgate, they smile at this as a local prejudice, and remind you of the Calton Hill. The conversation wanders and is impertinent, unless it hangs by this loop. It ‘runs the great mile, and is still at home.’ You would think there was no other place in the world but Scotland, but that they strive to convince you at every turn of its superiority to all other places. Nothing goes down but Scotch Magazines and Reviews, Scotch airs, Scotch bravery, Scotch hospitality, Scotch novels, and Scotch logic. Some one the other day at a literary dinner in Scotland apologised for alluding to the name of Shakespear so often, because he was not a Scotchman. What a blessing that the Duke of Wellington was not a Scotchman, or we should never have heard the last of him! Even Sir Walter Scott, I understand, talks of the Scotch novels in all companies; and by

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waving the title of the author, is at liberty to repeat the subject *ad infinitum*.

Lismahago in Smollett is a striking and laughable picture of this national propensity. He maintained with good discretion and method that oat-cakes were better than wheaten bread, and that the air of the old town of Edinburgh was sweet and salubrious. He was a favourable specimen of the class—acute though pertinacious, pleasant but wrong.<sup>1</sup> In general, his countrymen only plod on with the national character fastened behind them, looking round with wary eye and warning voice to those who would pick out a single article of their precious charge; and are as drawing and troublesome as if they were hired by the hour to disclaim and exemplify all the vices of which they stand accused. Is this repulsive egotism peculiar to them merely in their travelling capacity, when they have to make their way amongst strangers, and are jealous of the honour of the parent-country, on which they have ungraciously turned their backs? So Lord Erskine, after an absence of fifty years, made an appropriate eulogy on the place of his birth, and having traced the feeling of patriotism in himself to its source in that habitual attachment which all wandering tribes have to their places of fixed residence, turned his horses' heads towards England—and farewell sentiment!

The Irish and others, who come and stay among us, however full they may be of the same prejudice, keep it in a great measure to themselves, and do not vent it in all companies and on all occasions, proper or improper. The natives of the sister-kingdom in particular rather cut their country like a poor relation, are shy of being seen in one another's company, and try to soften down the *brogue* into a natural gentility of expression. A Scotchman, on the contrary, is never easy but when his favourite subject is started, treats it with unqualified breadth of accent, and seems assured that every one else must be as fond of talking of Scotland and Scotchmen as he is.

Is it a relic of the ancient system of *clanship*? And are the Scotch pitted against all the rest of the world, on the same principle that they formerly herded and banded together under some chosen leader, and *barried* the neighbouring district? This seems to be the most likely solution. A feeling of antipathy and partisanship, of offensive and defensive warfare, may be considered as necessary to the mind of a Scotchman. He is nothing in himself but as he is opposed to or in league with others. He must be for or against somebody. He must have a cause to fight for; a point to carry in argument. He is not an unit but an aggregate; he is not a link, but a chain. He belongs

<sup>1</sup> Some persons have asserted that the Scotch have no humour. It is in vain to set up this plea, since Smollett was a Scotchman.

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to the regiment. I should hardly call a Scotchman *conceited*, though there is often something that borders strongly on the appearance of it. He has (speaking in the lump) no personal or individual pretensions. He is not proud of himself, but of being a Scotchman. He has no existence or excellence except what he derives from some external accident, or shares with some body of men. He is a Brunonian, a Cameronian, a Jacobite, a Covenanter; he is of some party, he espouses some creed, he is great in some controversy, he was bred in some University, has attended a certain course of lectures, understands Gaelic, and upon occasion wears the Highland dress. An Englishman is satisfied with the character of his country, and proceeds to set up for himself; an Irishman despairs of that of his, and leaves it to shift for itself; a Scotchman pretends to respectability as such, and owes it to his country to make you hate the very name by his ceaseless importunity and intolerance in its behalf. An Irishman is mostly vain of his person, an Englishman of his understanding, a Frenchman of his politeness—a Scotchman thanks God for the place of his birth. The face of a Scotchman is to him accordingly the face of a friend. It is enough for him to let you know that he speaks the dialect that Wilkie speaks, that he has sat in company with the Author of Waverley. He does not endeavour to put forward his own notions so much as to inform you of the school in politics, in morals, in physic, in which he is an adept; nor does he attempt to overpower you by wit, by reason, by eloquence, but to tire you out by dint of verbal logic; and in common-places it must be confessed that he is invincible. There he is *teres et rotundus*. He fortifies himself in these, circumvallation within circumvallation, till his strong-hold is impregnable by art and nature. I never knew a Scotchman give up an argument but once. It was a very learned man, the Editor of an Encyclopedia,—not my friend, Mr. Macvey Napier. On some one's proposing the question why Greek should not be printed in the Roman type, this gentleman answered, that in that case it would be impossible to distinguish the two languages. Every one stared, and it was asked how at this rate we distinguished French from English? It was the forlorn hope. Any one else would have laughed, and confessed the blunder. But the Editor was a grave man—made an obstinate defence (the best his situation allowed of) and yielded in the forms and with the honours of war.

A Scotchman is generally a dealer in staple-propositions, and not in rarities and curiosities of the understanding. He does not like an idea the worse for its coming to him from a reputable, well-authenticated source, as I conceive he might feel more respect for a son of Burns than for Burns himself, on the same hereditary or genealogical

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principle. He swears (of course) by the Edinburgh Review, and thinks Blackwood not easily put down. He takes the word of a Professor in the University-chair in a point of philosophy as he formerly took the Laird's word in a matter of life and death; and has the names of the Says, the Benthames, the Mills, the Malthuses, in his mouth, instead of the Montroses, the Gordons, and the Macullamores. He follows in a train; he enlists under some standard; he comes under some collateral description. He is of the tribe of Issachar, and not of Judah. He stickles for no higher distinction than that of his clan, or vicinage.<sup>1</sup> In a word, the Scotch are the creatures of inveterate habit. They pin their faith on example and authority. All their ideas are cast in a previous mould, and rivetted to those of others. It is not a single blow, but a repetition of blows, that leaves an impression on them. They are strong only in the strength of prejudice and numbers. The genius of their greatest living writer is the genius of national tradition. He has 'damnable iteration in him'; but hardly one grain of sheer invention. His mind is turned instinctively backward on the past—he cannot project it forward to the future. He has not the faculty of imagining any thing, either in individual or general truth, different from what has been handed down to him for such. Give him *costume*, dialect, manners, popular superstitions, grotesque characters, supernatural events, and local scenery, and he is a prodigy, a man-monster among writers—take these actually embodied and endless materials from him, and he is a common man, with as little original power of mind as he has (unfortunately) independence or boldness of spirit!—

The Scotch, with all their mechanical, wholesale attachment to names and parties, are venal in politics,<sup>2</sup> and cowardly in friendship. They crouch to power; and would be more disposed to fall upon and crush, than come forward to the support of, a sinking individual. They are not like La Fleur in the Sentimental Journey, who advanced three steps forward to his master when the *Gens-d'Armes* arrested him: they are like the *Maitre d'Hotel*, who retired three paces backwards on the same occasion. They will support a generic denomination, where they have numbers to support them again: they make

<sup>1</sup> This may be in part the reason of the blunder they have made in laying so much stress on what they call the *Cockney School in Poetry*—as if the people in London were proud of that distinction, and really thought it a particular honour to get their living in the metropolis, as the Scottish 'Kernes and Gallowglasses' think it a wonderful step in their progress through life to be able to hire a lodging and pay *scot and lot* in the good town of Edinburgh.

<sup>2</sup> It was not always so. But by knocking on the head the Jacobite loyalty of the Scotch, their political integrity of principle has been destroyed and dissipated to all the winds of Heaven.



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a great gulp, and swallow down a feudal lord with all the retinue he can muster—the more, the merrier—but of a single unprotected straggler they are shy, jealous, scrupulous in the extreme as to character, inquisitive as to connections, curious in all the particulars of birth, parentage, and education. Setting his prejudices of country, religion, or party aside, you have no hold of a Scotchman but by his self-interest. If it is for his credit or advantage to stand by you, he will do it : otherwise, it will go very much against both his stomach and his conscience to do so, and you must e'en shift for yourself. You may trust something to the generosity and magnanimity of an Englishman or an Irishman ; they act from an impulse of the blood or from a sense of justice : a Scotchman (the exceptions are splendid indeed) uniformly calculates the consequences to himself. He is naturally faithful to a leader, as I said before, that is, to a powerful head ; but his fidelity amounts to little more than servility. He is a bigot to the shadow of power and authority, a slave to prejudice and custom, and a coward in every thing else. He has not a particle of mental courage. Cæsar's wife was not to be suspected ; and it is the same with a Scotchman's friend. If a word is said against your moral character, they shun you like a plague-spot. They are not only afraid of a charge being proved against you, but they dare not disprove it, lest by clearing you of it they should be supposed a party to what had no existence or foundation. They thus imbibe a bad opinion of you from hearsay, and conceal the good they know of you both from themselves and the world. If your political orthodoxy is called in question, they take the alarm as much as if they were apprehensive of being involved in a charge of high treason. One would think that the whole country laboured, as they did SIXTY YEARS SINCE, under an imputation of disaffection, and were exposed to the utmost vigilance of the police, so that each person had too little character for loyalty himself to run any additional risk by his neighbour's bad name. This is not the case at present : but they carry their precautions and circumspection in this respect to such an idle and stupid excess, as can only be accounted for from local circumstances and history—that is to say, from the effects of that long system of suspicion, persecution and *surveillance*, to which they were exposed during a century of ridiculous (at least of unsuccessful) wars and rebellions, in favour of the House of Stuart. They suffered much for King James and the *Good Cause* ; but since that time their self-love must be excused to look at home. On my once complaining to a Scotchman of what I thought a dereliction of his client's cause by the counsel for the defendant in a prosecution for libel, I received for answer—That ' Mr. — had defended the accused as far as he could, *consistently*

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*with his character,*—though the only character the Learned Gentleman could boast, had been acquired by his skill, if not his courage, in resisting prosecutions of this kind.

The delicate sensibility (not to say soreness) of the Scotch in matters of moral reputation, may in like manner be accounted for (indirectly) from their domiciliary system of church-government, of Kirk-assemblies, and Ruling Elders : and in the unprincipled assurance with which aspersions of this sort are thrown out, and the panic-terror which they strike into the timid or hypocritical, one may see the remaining effects of Penance-Sheets and Cutty-Stools ! Poor Burns ! he called up the ghost of Dr. Hornbook, but did not lay the spirit of cant and lying in the cunning North !—

Something however, it must be confessed, has been done ; a change has been effected. Extremes meet ; and the Saint has been (in some instances) merged in the Sinner. The essential character of the Scotch is determined self-will, the driving at a purpose ; so that whatever they undertake, they make thorough-stitch work, and carry as far as it will go. This is the case in the pretensions some of their writers have lately set up to a contempt for Cutty-Stools, and to all the freedom of wit and humour. They have been so long under interdict that they break out with double violence, and stop at nothing. Of all *blackguards* (I use the term for want of any other) a Scotch blackguard is for this reason the worst. First, the character sits ill upon him for want of use, and is sure to be most outrageously caricatured. He is only just broke loose from the shackles of regularity and restraint, and is forced to play strange antics to be convinced that they are not still clinging to his heels. Secondly, formality, hypocrisy, and a deference to opinion, are the ‘sins that most easily beset him.’ When therefore he has once made up his mind to disregard appearances, he becomes totally reckless of character, and ‘at one bound high overleaps all bound’ of decency and common sense. Again, there is perhaps a natural hardness and want of nervous sensibility about the Scotch, which renders them (rules and the consideration of consequences apart) not very nice or scrupulous in their proceedings. If they are not withheld by conscience or prudence, they have no *mauvaise honte*, no involuntary qualms or tremors, to qualify their effrontery and disregard of principle. Their impudence is extreme, their malice is cold-blooded, covert, crawling, deliberate, without the frailty or excuse of passion. They club their vices and their venality together, and by the help of both together are invincible. The choice spirits who have lately figured in a much-talked-of publication, with ‘old Sylvanus at their head,’—

‘Leaning on cypress stadle stout,’—

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in their 'pious orgies' resemble a troop of Yahoos, or a herd of Satyrs—

'And with their horned feet they beat the ground!'—

that is to say, the floor of Mr. Blackwood's shop! There is one other publication, a match for this in flagrant impudence and dauntless dulness, which is the *John Bull*. The Editor is supposed, for the honour of Scotland, to be an Irishman. What the *BEACON* might have proved, there is no saying; but it would have been curious to have seen some articles of Sir Walter's undoubted hand proceeding from this quarter, as it has been always contended that Blackwood's *Edinburgh Magazine* was too low and scurrilous a publication for him to have any share in it. The adventure of the *BEACON* has perhaps discovered to Sir Walter's admirers and the friends of humanity in general, that

'Entire affection scorneth nicer hands!'

Old Dr. Burney, about the middle of the last century, called one morning on Thomson, the Author of *The Seasons*, at a late hour, and on expressing his surprise at the poet's not having risen sooner, received for answer,—'I had no motive, young man!' A Scotchman acts always from a motive, and on due consideration; and if he does not act right or with a view to honest ends, is more dangerous than any one else. Others may plead the vices of their blood in extenuation of their errors; but a Scotchman is a machine, and should be constructed on sound moral, and philosophical principles, or should be put a stop to altogether.

### ESSAY XI

#### MY FIRST ACQUAINTANCE WITH POETS

My father was a Dissenting Minister at W—m in Shropshire; and in the year 1798 (the figures that compose that date are to me like the 'dreaded name of Demogorgon') Mr. Coleridge came to Shrewsbury, to succeed Mr. Rowe in the spiritual charge of a Unitarian Congregation there. He did not come till late on the Saturday afternoon before he was to preach; and Mr. Rowe, who himself went down to the coach in a state of anxiety and expectation, to look for the arrival of his successor, could find no one at all answering the description but a round-faced man in a short black coat (like a shooting jacket) which hardly seemed to have been made for

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him, but who seemed to be talking at a great rate to his fellow-passengers. Mr. Rowe had scarce returned to give an account of his disappointment, when the round-faced man in black entered, and dissipated all doubts on the subject, by beginning to talk. He did not cease while he staid; nor has he since, that I know of. He held the good town of Shrewsbury in delightful suspense for three weeks that he remained there, 'fluttering the *proud Salopians* like an eagle in a dove-cote;' and the Welch mountains that skirt the horizon with their tempestuous confusion, agree to have heard no such mystic sounds since the days of

'High-born Hoel's harp or soft Llewellyn's lay!'

As we passed along between W—m and Shrewsbury, and I eyed their blue tops seen through the wintry branches, or the red rustling leaves of the sturdy oak-trees by the road-side, a sound was in my ears as of a Siren's song; I was stunned, startled with it, as from deep sleep; but I had no notion then that I should ever be able to express my admiration to others in motley imagery or quaint allusion, till the light of his genius shone into my soul, like the sun's rays glittering in the puddles of the road. I was at that time dumb, inarticulate, helpless, like a worm by the way-side, crushed, bleeding, lifeless; but now, bursting from the deadly bands that 'bound them,

'With Styx nine times round them,'

my ideas float on winged words, and as they expand their plumes, catch the golden light of other years. My soul has indeed remained in its original bondage, dark, obscure, with longings infinite and unsatisfied; my heart, shut up in the prison-house of this rude clay, has never found, nor will it ever find, a heart to speak to; but that my understanding also did not remain dumb and brutish, or at length found a language to express itself, I owe to Coleridge. But this is not to my purpose.

My father lived ten miles from Shrewsbury, and was in the habit of exchanging visits with Mr. Rowe, and with Mr. Jenkins of Whitchurch (nine miles farther on) according to the custom of Dissenting Ministers in each other's neighbourhood. A line of communication is thus established, by which the flame of civil and religious liberty is kept alive, and nourishes its smouldering fire unquenchable, like the fires in the Agamemnon of Æschylus, placed at different stations, that waited for ten long years to announce with their blazing pyramids the destruction of Troy. Coleridge had agreed to come over to see my father, according to the courtesy of the country, as Mr. Rowe's probable successor; but in the meantime I had gone to hear him

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preach the Sunday after his arrival. A poet and a philosopher getting up into a Unitarian pulpit to preach the Gospel, was a romance in these degenerate days, a sort of revival of the primitive spirit of Christianity, which was not to be resisted.

It was in January, 1798, that I rose one morning before daylight, to walk ten miles in the mud, and went to hear this celebrated person preach. Never, the longest day I have to live, shall I have such another walk as this cold, raw, comfortless one, in the winter of the year 1798. *Il y a des impressions que ni le tems ni les circonstances peuvent effacer. Dusse-je vivre des siècles entiers, le doux tems de ma jeunesse ne peut renaitre pour moi, ni s'effacer jamais dans ma mémoire.* When I got there, the organ was playing the 100th psalm, and, when it was done, Mr. Coleridge rose and gave out his text, 'And he went up into the mountain to pray, HIMSELF, ALONE.' As he gave out his text, his voice 'rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes,' and when he came to the two last words, which he pronounced loud, deep, and distinct, it seemed to me, who was then young, as if the sounds had echoed from the bottom of the human heart, and as if that prayer might have floated in solemn silence through the universe. The idea of St. John came into mind, 'of one crying in the wilderness, who had his loins girt about, and whose food was locusts and wild honey.' The preacher then launched into his subject, like an eagle dallying with the wind. The sermon was upon peace and war; upon church and state—not their alliance, but their separation—on the spirit of the world and the spirit of Christianity, not as the same, but as opposed to one another. He talked of those who had 'inscribed the cross of Christ on banners dripping with human gore.' He made a poetical and pastoral excursion,—and to shew the fatal effects of war, drew a striking contrast between the simple shepherd boy, driving his team afield, or sitting under the hawthorn, piping to his flock, 'as though he should never be old,' and the same poor country-lad, crimped, kidnapped, brought into town, made drunk at an alehouse, turned into a wretched drummer-boy, with his hair sticking on end with powder and pomatum, a long cue at his back, and tricked out in the loathsome finery of the profession of blood.

'Such were the notes our once-lov'd poet sung.'

And for myself, I could not have been more delighted if I had heard the music of the spheres. Poetry and Philosophy had met together. Truth and Genius had embraced, under the eye and with the sanction of Religion. This was even beyond my hopes. I returned home well satisfied. The sun that was still labouring pale and wan through the sky, obscured by thick mists, seemed an emblem of the *good cause*;

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and the cold dank drops of dew that hung half melted on the beard of the thistle, had something genial and refreshing in them ; for there was a spirit of hope and youth in all nature, that turned every thing into good. The face of nature had not then the brand of *Jus DIVINUM* on it :

‘ Like to that sanguine flower inscrib’d with woe.’

On the Tuesday following, the half-inspired speaker came. I was called down into the room where he was, and went half-hoping, half-afraid. He received me very graciously, and I listened for a long time without uttering a word. I did not suffer in his opinion by my silence. ‘ For those two hours,’ he afterwards was pleased to say, ‘ he was conversing with W. H.’s forehead !’ His appearance was different from what I had anticipated from seeing him before. At a distance, and in the dim light of the chapel, there was to me a strange wildness in his aspect, a dusky obscurity, and I thought him pitted with the small-pox. His complexion was at that time clear, and even bright—

‘ As are the children of yon azure sheen.’

His forehead was broad and high, light as if built of ivory, with large projecting eyebrows, and his eyes rolling beneath them like a sea with darkened lustre. ‘ A certain tender bloom his face o’erspread,’ a purple tinge as we see it in the pale thoughtful complexions of the Spanish portrait-painters, Murillo and Velasquez. His mouth was gross, voluptuous, open, eloquent ; his chin good-humoured and round ; but his nose, the rudder of the face, the index of the will, was small, feeble, nothing—like what he has done. It might seem that the genius of his face as from a height surveyed and projected him (with sufficient capacity and huge aspiration) into the world unknown of thought and imagination, with nothing to support or guide his veering purpose, as if Columbus had launched his adventurous course for the New World in a scallop, without oars or compass. So at least I comment on it after the event. Coleridge in his person was rather above the common size, inclining to the corpulent, or like Lord Hamlet, ‘ somewhat fat and pursy.’ His hair (now, alas ! grey) was then black and glossy as the raven’s, and fell in smooth masses over his forehead. This long pendulous hair is peculiar to enthusiasts, to those whose minds tend heavenward ; and is traditionally inseparable (though of a different colour) from the pictures of Christ. It ought to belong, as a character, to all who preach *Christ crucified*, and Coleridge was at that time one of those !

It was curious to observe the contrast between him and my father,

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who was a veteran in the cause, and then declining into the vale of years. He had been a poor Irish lad, carefully brought up by his parents, and sent to the University of Glasgow (where he studied under Adam Smith) to prepare him for his future destination. It was his mother's proudest wish to see her son a Dissenting Minister. So if we look back to past generations (as far as eye can reach) we see the same hopes, fears, wishes, followed by the same disappointments, throbbing in the human heart ; and so we may see them (if we look forward) rising up for ever, and disappearing, like vapourish bubbles, in the human breast ! After being tossed about from congregation to congregation in the heats of the Unitarian controversy, and squabbles about the American war, he had been relegated to an obscure village, where he was to spend the last thirty years of his life, far from the only converse that he loved, the talk about disputed texts of Scripture and the cause of civil and religious liberty. Here he passed his days, repining but resigned, in the study of the Bible, and the perusal of the Commentators,—huge folios, not easily got through, one of which would outlast a winter ! Why did he pore on these from morn to night (with the exception of a walk in the fields or a turn in the garden to gather broccoli-plants or kidney-beans of his own rearing, with no small degree of pride and pleasure) ?—Here were 'no figures nor no fantasies,'—neither poetry nor philosophy—nothing to dazzle, nothing to excite modern curiosity ; but to his lack-lustre eyes there appeared, within the pages of the ponderous, unwieldy, neglected tomes, the sacred name of JEHOVAH in Hebrew capitals : pressed down by the weight of the style, worn to the last fading thinness of the understanding, there were glimpses, glimmering notions of the patriarchal wanderings, with palm-trees hovering in the horizon, and processions of camels at the distance of three thousand years ; there was Moses with the Burning Bush, the number of the Twelve Tribes, types, shadows, glosses on the law and the prophets ; there were discussions (dull enough) on the age of Methuselah, a mighty speculation ! there were outlines, rude guesses at the shape of Noah's Ark and of the riches of Solomon's Temple ; questions as to the date of the creation, predictions of the end of all things ; the great lapses of time, the strange mutations of the globe were unfolded with the voluminous leaf, as it turned over ; and though the soul might slumber with an hieroglyphic veil of inscrutable mysteries drawn over it, yet it was in a slumber ill-exchanged for all the sharpened realities of sense, wit, fancy, or reason. My father's life was comparatively a dream ; but it was a dream of infinity and eternity, of death, the resurrection, and a judgment to come !

No two individuals were ever more unlike than were the host and

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his guest. A poet was to my father a sort of nondescript : yet whatever added grace to the Unitarian cause was to him welcome. He could hardly have been more surprised or pleased, if our visitor had worn wings. Indeed, his thoughts had wings; and as the silken sounds rustled round our little wainscoted parlour, my father threw back his spectacles over his forehead, his white hairs mixing with its sanguine hue; and a smile of delight beamed across his rugged cordial face, to think that Truth had found a new ally in Fancy!<sup>1</sup> Besides, Coleridge seemed to take considerable notice of me, and that of itself was enough. He talked very familiarly, but agreeably, and glanced over a variety of subjects. At dinner-time he grew more animated, and dilated in a very edifying manner on Mary Wolstonecraft and Mackintosh. The last, he said, he considered (on my father's speaking of his *Vindiciæ Gallicæ* as a capital performance) as a clever scholastic man—a master of the topics,—or as the ready warehouseman of letters, who knew exactly where to lay his hand on what he wanted, though the goods were not his own. He thought him no match for Burke, either in style or matter. Burke was a metaphysician, Mackintosh a mere logician. Burke was an orator (almost a poet) who reasoned in figures, because he had an eye for nature : Mackintosh, on the other hand, was a rhetorician, who had only an eye to common-places. On this I ventured to say that I had always entertained a great opinion of Burke, and that (as far as I could find) the speaking of him with contempt might be made the test of a vulgar democratical mind. This was the first observation I ever made to Coleridge, and he said it was a very just and striking one. I remember the leg of Welsh mutton and the turnips on the table that day had the finest flavour imaginable. Coleridge added that Mackintosh and Tom Wedgwood (of whom, however, he spoke highly) had expressed a very indifferent opinion of his friend Mr. Wordsworth, on which he remarked to them—‘He strides on so far before you, that he dwindles in the distance!’ Godwin had once boasted to him of having carried on an argument with Mackintosh for three hours with dubious success; Coleridge told him—‘If there had been a man of genius in the room, he would have settled the question in five minutes.’ He asked me if I had ever seen Mary Wolstonecraft, and I said, I had once for a few moments, and that she seemed to me to turn off Godwin's objections to something she advanced with quite a playful, easy air. He replied, that ‘this was only one instance of

<sup>1</sup> My father was one of those who mistook his talent after all. He used to be very much dissatisfied that I preferred his Letters to his Sermons. The last were forced and dry; the first came naturally from him. For ease, half-plays on words, and a supine, monkish, indolent pleasantry, I have never seen them equalled.



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the ascendancy which people of imagination exercised over those of mere intellect.' He did not rate Godwin very high<sup>1</sup> (this was caprice or prejudice, real or affected) but he had a great idea of Mrs. Wolstonecraft's powers of conversation, none at all of her talent for book-making. We talked a little about Holcroft. He had been asked if he was not much struck *with* him, and he said, he thought himself in more danger of being struck *by* him. I complained that he would not let me get on at all, for he required a definition of every the commonest word, exclaiming, 'What do you mean by a *sensation*, Sir? What do you mean by an *idea*?' This, Coleridge said, was barricadoing the road to truth:—it was setting up a turnpike-gate at every step we took. I forget a great number of things, many more than I remember; but the day passed off pleasantly, and the next morning Mr. Coleridge was to return to Shrewsbury. When I came down to breakfast, I found that he had just received a letter from his friend T. Wedgwood, making him an offer of 150*l.* a-year if he chose to wave his present pursuit, and devote himself entirely to the study of poetry and philosophy. Coleridge seemed to make up his mind to close with this proposal in the act of tying on one of his shoes. It threw an additional damp on his departure. It took the wayward enthusiast quite from us to cast him into Deva's winding vales, or by the shores of old romance. Instead of living at ten miles distance, of being the pastor of a Dissenting congregation at Shrewsbury, he was henceforth to inhabit the Hill of Parnassus, to be a shepherd on the Delectable Mountains. Alas! I knew not the way thither, and felt very little gratitude for Mr. Wedgwood's bounty. I was presently relieved from this dilemma; for Mr. Coleridge, asking for a pen and ink, and going to a table to write something on a bit of card, advanced towards me with undulating step, and giving me the precious document, said that that was his address, *Mr. Coleridge, Nether-Stowey, Somersetshire*; and that he should be glad to see me there in a few weeks' time, and, if I chose, would come half-way to meet me. I was not less surprised than the shepherd-boy (this simile is to be found in Cassandra) when he sees a thunder-bolt fall close at his feet. I stammered out my acknowledgments and acceptance of this offer (I thought Mr. Wedgwood's annuity a trifle to it) as well as I could; and this mighty business being settled, the poet-preacher took leave, and I accompanied him six miles on the road. It was a fine morning in the middle of winter,

<sup>1</sup> He complained in particular of the presumption of attempting to establish the future immortality of man 'without' (as he said) 'knowing what Death was or what Life was'—and the tone in which he pronounced these two words seemed to convey a complete image of both.

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and he talked the whole way. The scholar in Chaucer is described as going

——‘Sounding on his way.’

So Coleridge went on his. In digressing, in dilating, in passing from subject to subject, he appeared to me to float in air, to slide on ice. He told me in confidence (going along) that he should have preached two sermons before he accepted the situation at Shrewsbury, one on Infant Baptism, the other on the Lord's Supper, shewing that he could not administer either, which would have effectually disqualified him for the object in view. I observed that he continually crossed me on the way by shifting from one side of the foot-path to the other. This struck me as an odd movement; but I did not at that time connect it with any instability of purpose or involuntary change of principle, as I have done since. He seemed unable to keep on in a strait line. He spoke slightly of Hume (whose *Essay on Miracles* he said was stolen from an objection started in one of South's sermons—*Credat Judæus Apella!*) I was not very much pleased at this account of Hume, for I had just been reading, with infinite relish, that completest of all metaphysical *choke-pears*, his *Treatise on Human Nature*, to which the *Essays*, in point of scholastic subtlety and close reasoning, are mere elegant trifling, light summer-reading. Coleridge even denied the excellence of Hume's general style, which I think betrayed a want of taste or candour. He however made me amends by the manner in which he spoke of Berkeley. He dwelt particularly on his *Essay on Vision* as a masterpiece of analytical reasoning. So it undoubtedly is. He was exceedingly angry with Dr. Johnson for striking the stone with his foot, in allusion to this author's Theory of Matter and Spirit, and saying, ‘Thus I confute him, Sir.’ Coleridge drew a parallel (I don't know how he brought about the connection) between Bishop Berkeley and Tom Paine. He said the one was an instance of a subtle, the other of an acute mind, than which no two things could be more distinct. The one was a shop-boy's quality, the other the characteristic of a philosopher. He considered Bishop Butler as a true philosopher, a profound and conscientious thinker, a genuine reader of nature and of his own mind. He did not speak of his *Analogy*, but of his *Sermons at the Rolls' Chapel*, of which I had never heard. Coleridge somehow always contrived to prefer the *unknown* to the *known*. In this instance he was right. The *Analogy* is a tissue of sophistry, of wire-drawn, theological special-pleading; the *Sermons* (with the Preface to them) are in a fine vein of deep, matured reflection, a candid appeal to our observation of human nature, without pedantry and without bias. I

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told Coleridge I had written a few remarks, and was sometimes foolish enough to believe that I had made a discovery on the same subject (the *Natural Disinterestedness of the Human Mind*)—and I tried to explain my view of it to Coleridge, who listened with great willingness, but I did not succeed in making myself understood. I sat down to the task shortly afterwards for the twentieth time, got new pens and paper, determined to make clear work of it, wrote a few meagre sentences in the skeleton-style of a mathematical demonstration, stopped half-way down the second page; and, after trying in vain to pump up any words, images, notions, apprehensions, facts, or observations, from that gulph of abstraction in which I had plunged myself for four or five years preceding, gave up the attempt as labour in vain, and shed tears of helpless despondency on the blank unfinished paper. I can write fast enough now. Am I better than I was then? Oh no! One truth discovered, one pang of regret at not being able to express it, is better than all the fluency and flippancy in the world. Would that I could go back to what I then was! Why can we not revive past times as we can revisit old places? If I had the quaint Muse of Sir Philip Sidney to assist me, I would write a *Sonnet to the Road between W—m and Shrewsbury*, and immortalise every step of it by some fond enigmatical conceit. I would swear that the very milestones had ears, and that Harmer-hill stooped with all its pines, to listen to a poet, as he passed! I remember but one other topic of discourse in this walk. He mentioned Paley, praised the naturalness and clearness of his style, but condemned his sentiments, thought him a mere time-serving casuist, and said that ‘the fact of his work on Moral and Political Philosophy being made a text-book in our Universities was a disgrace to the national character.’ We parted at the six-mile stone; and I returned homeward pensive but much pleased. I had met with unexpected notice from a person, whom I believed to have been prejudiced against me. ‘Kind and affable to me had been his condescension, and should be honoured ever with suitable regard.’ He was the first poet I had known, and he certainly answered to that inspired name. I had heard a great deal of his powers of conversation, and was not disappointed. In fact, I never met with any thing at all like them, either before or since. I could easily credit the accounts which were circulated of his holding forth to a large party of ladies and gentlemen, an evening or two before, on the Berkeleyian Theory, when he made the whole material universe look like a transparency of fine words; and another story (which I believe he has somewhere told himself) of his being asked to a party at Birmingham, of his smoking tobacco and going to sleep after dinner on a sofa, where the company found him to their no

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small surprise, which was increased to wonder when he started up of a sudden, and rubbing his eyes, looked about him, and launched into a three-hours' description of the third heaven, of which he had had a dream, very different from Mr. Southey's *Vision of Judgment*, and also from that other *Vision of Judgment*, which Mr. Murray, the Secretary of the Bridge-street Junto, has taken into his especial keeping !

On my way back, I had a sound in my ears, it was the voice of Fancy : I had a light before me, it was the face of Poetry. The one still lingers there, the other has not quitted my side ! Coleridge in truth met me half-way on the ground of philosophy, or I should not have been won over to his imaginative creed. I had an uneasy, pleasurable sensation all the time, till I was to visit him. During those months the chill breath of winter gave me a welcoming ; the vernal air was balm and inspiration to me. The golden sunsets, the silver star of evening, lighted me on my way to new hopes and prospects. *I was to visit Coleridge in the spring.* This circumstance was never absent from my thoughts, and mingled with all my feelings. I wrote to him at the time proposed, and received an answer postponing my intended visit for a week or two, but very cordially urging me to complete my promise then. This delay did not damp, but rather increased my ardour. In the meantime, I went to Llangollen Vale, by way of initiating myself in the mysteries of natural scenery ; and I must say I was enchanted with it. I had been reading Coleridge's description of England in his fine *Ode on the Departing Year*, and I applied it, *con amore*, to the objects before me. That valley was to me (in a manner) the cradle of a new existence : in the river that winds through it, my spirit was baptised in the waters of Helicon !

I returned home, and soon after set out on my journey with unworn heart and untried feet. My way lay through Worcester and Gloucester, and by Upton, where I thought of Tom Jones and the adventure of the muff. I remember getting completely wet through one day, and stopping at an inn (I think it was at Tewkesbury) where I sat up all night to read Paul and Virginia. Sweet were the showers in early youth that drenched my body, and sweet the drops of pity that fell upon the books I read ! I recollect a remark of Coleridge's upon this very book, that nothing could shew the gross indelicacy of French manners and the entire corruption of their imagination more strongly than the behaviour of the heroine in the last fatal scene, who turns away from a person on board the sinking vessel, that offers to save her life, because he has thrown off his clothes to assist him in swimming. Was this a time to think of such a circumstance ? I once hinted to Wordsworth, as we were sailing

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in his boat on Grasmere lake, that I thought he had borrowed the idea of his *Poems on the Naming of Places* from the local inscriptions of the same kind in Paul and Virginia. He did not own the obligation, and stated some distinction without a difference, in defence of his claim to originality. Any the slightest variation would be sufficient for this purpose in his mind; for whatever *he* added or omitted would inevitably be worth all that any one else had done, and contain the marrow of the sentiment. I was still two days before the time fixed for my arrival, for I had taken care to set out early enough. I stopped these two days at Bridgewater, and when I was tired of sauntering on the banks of its muddy river, returned to the inn, and read Camilla. So have I loitered my life away, reading books, looking at pictures, going to plays, hearing, thinking, writing on what pleased me best. I have wanted only one thing to make me happy; but wanting that, have wanted everything!

I arrived, and was well received. The country about Nether Stowey is beautiful, green and hilly, and near the sea-shore. I saw it but the other day, after an interval of twenty years, from a hill near Taunton. How was the map of my life spread out before me, as the map of the country lay at my feet! In the afternoon, Coleridge took me over to All-Foxden, a romantic old family-mansion of the St. Aubins, where Wordsworth lived. It was then in the possession of a friend of the poet's who gave him the free use of it. Somehow that period (the time just after the French Revolution) was not a time when *nothing was given for nothing*. The mind opened, and a softness might be perceived coming over the heart of individuals, beneath 'the scales that fence' our self-interest. Wordsworth himself was from home, but his sister kept house, and set before us a frugal repast; and we had free access to her brother's poems, the *Lyrical Ballads*, which were still in manuscript, or in the form of *Sybilline Leaves*. I dipped into a few of these with great satisfaction, and with the faith of a novice. I slept that night in an old room with blue hangings, and covered with the round-faced family-portraits of the age of George I. and II., and from the wooded declivity of the adjoining park that overlooked my window, at the dawn of day, could

' — hear the loud stag speak.'

In the outset of life (and particularly at this time I felt it so) our imagination has a body to it. We are in a state between sleeping and waking, and have indistinct but glorious glimpses of strange shapes, and there is always something to come better than what we see. As in our dreams the fulness of the blood gives warmth and

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reality to the coinage of the brain, so in youth our ideas are clothed, and fed, and pampered with our good spirits; we breathe thick with thoughtless happiness, the weight of future years presses on the strong pulses of the heart, and we repose with undisturbed faith in truth and good. As we advance, we exhaust our fund of enjoyment and of hope. We are no longer wrapped in *lamb's-wool*, lulled in Elysium. As we taste the pleasures of life, their spirit evaporates, the sense palls; and nothing is left but the phantoms, the lifeless shadows of what *has been*!

That morning, as soon as breakfast was over, we strolled out into the park, and seating ourselves on the trunk of an old ash-tree that stretched along the ground, Coleridge read aloud with a sonorous and musical voice, the ballad of *Betty Foy*. I was not critically or sceptically inclined. I saw touches of truth and nature, and took the rest for granted. But in the *Thorn*, the *Mad Mother*, and the *Complaint of a Poor Indian Woman*, I felt that deeper power and pathos which have been since acknowledged,

‘In spite of pride, in erring reason’s spite,’

as the characteristics of this author; and the sense of a new style and a new spirit in poetry came over me. It had to me something of the effect that arises from the turning up of the fresh soil, or of the first welcome breath of Spring,

‘While yet the trembling year is unconfirmed.’

Coleridge and myself walked back to Stowey that evening, and his voice sounded high

‘Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,  
Fix’d fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute,’

as we passed through echoing grove, by fairy stream or waterfall, gleaming in the summer moonlight! He lamented that Wordsworth was not prone enough to believe in the traditional superstitions of the place, and that there was a something corporeal, a *matter-of-fact-ness*, a clinging to the palpable, or often to the petty, in his poetry, in consequence. His genius was not a spirit that descended to him through the air; it sprung out of the ground like a flower, or unfolded itself from a green spray, on which the gold-finch sang. He said, however (if I remember right), that this objection must be confined to his descriptive pieces, that his philosophic poetry had a grand and comprehensive spirit in it, so that his soul seemed to inhabit the universe like a palace, and to discover truth by intuition, rather than by deduction. The next day Wordsworth arrived from Bristol at Coleridge’s

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cottage. I think I see him now. He answered in some degree to his friend's description of him, but was more gaunt and Don Quixote-like. He was quaintly dressed (according to the *costume* of that unconstrained period) in a brown fustian jacket and striped pantaloons. There was something of a roll, a lounge in his gait, not unlike his own Peter Bell. There was a severe, worn pressure of thought about his temples, a fire in his eye (as if he saw something in objects more than the outward appearance), an intense high narrow forehead, a Roman nose, cheeks furrowed by strong purpose and feeling, and a convulsive inclination to laughter about the mouth, a good deal at variance with the solemn, stately expression of the rest of his face. Chantry's bust wants the marking traits; but he was teased into making it regular and heavy: Haydon's head of him, introduced into the *Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem*, is the most like his drooping weight of thought and expression. He sat down and talked very naturally and freely, with a mixture of clear gushing accents in his voice, a deep guttural intonation, and a strong tincture of the northern *burr*, like the crust on wine. He instantly began to make havoc of the half of a Cheshire cheese on the table, and said triumphantly that 'his marriage with experience had not been so unproductive as Mr. Southey's in teaching him a knowledge of the good things of this life.' He had been to see the *Castle Spectre* by Monk Lewis, while at Bristol, and described it very well. He said 'it fitted the taste of the audience like a glove.' This *ad captandum* merit was however by no means a recommendation of it, according to the severe principles of the new school, which reject rather than court popular effect. Wordsworth, looking out of the low, latticed window, said, 'How beautifully the sun sets on that yellow bank!' I thought within myself, 'With what eyes these poets see nature!' and ever after, when I saw the sun-set stream upon the objects facing it, conceived I had made a discovery, or thanked Mr. Wordsworth for having made one for me! We went over to All-Foxden again the day following, and Wordsworth read us the story of Peter Bell in the open air; and the comment made upon it by his face and voice was very different from that of some later critics! Whatever might be thought of the poem, 'his face was as a book where men might read strange matters,' and he announced the fate of his hero in prophetic tones. There is a *chaunt* in the recitation both of Coleridge and Wordsworth, which acts as a spell upon the hearer, and disarms the judgment. Perhaps they have deceived themselves by making habitual use of this ambiguous accompaniment. Coleridge's manner is more full, animated, and varied; Wordsworth's more equable, sustained, and internal. The one might be termed more *dramatic*, the

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other more *lyrical*. Coleridge has told me that he himself liked to compose in walking over uneven ground, or breaking through the straggling branches of a copse-wood; whereas Wordsworth always wrote (if he could) walking up and down a straight gravel-walk, or in some spot where the continuity of his verse met with no collateral interruption. Returning that same evening, I got into a metaphysical argument with Wordsworth, while Coleridge was explaining the different notes of the nightingale to his sister, in which we neither of us succeeded in making ourselves perfectly clear and intelligible. Thus I passed three weeks at Nether Stowey and in the neighbourhood, generally devoting the afternoons to a delightful chat in an arbour made of bark by the poet's friend Tom Poole, sitting under two fine elm-trees, and listening to the bees humming round us, while we quaffed our *flip*. It was agreed, among other things, that we should make a jaunt down the Bristol-Channel, as far as Linton. We set off together on foot, Coleridge, John Chester, and I. This Chester was a native of Nether Stowey, one of those who were attracted to Coleridge's discourse as flies are to honey, or bees in swarming-time to the sound of a brass pan. He 'followed in the chase, like a dog who hunts, not like one that made up the cry.' He had on a brown cloth coat, boots, and corduroy breeches, was low in stature, bow-legged, had a drag in his walk like a drover, which he assisted by a hazel switch, and kept on a sort of trot by the side of Coleridge, like a running footman by a state coach, that he might not lose a syllable or sound that fell from Coleridge's lips. He told me his private opinion, that Coleridge was a wonderful man. He scarcely opened his lips, much less offered an opinion the whole way: yet of the three, had I to chuse during that journey, I would be John Chester. He afterwards followed Coleridge into Germany, where the Kantian philosophers were puzzled how to bring him under any of their categories. When he sat down at table with his idol, John's felicity was complete; Sir Walter Scott's, or Mr. Blackwood's, when they sat down at the same table with the King, was not more so. We passed Dunster on our right, a small town between the brow of a hill and the sea. I remember eyeing it wistfully as it lay below us: contrasted with the woody scene around, it looked as clear, as pure, as *embrowned* and ideal as any landscape I have seen since, of Gaspar Poussin's or Domenichino's. We had a long day's march—(our feet kept time to the echoes of Coleridge's tongue)—through Minehead and by the Blue Anchor, and on to Linton, which we did not reach till near midnight, and where we had some difficulty in making a lodgment. We however knocked the people of the house up at last, and we were repaid for our apprehensions and fatigue by some



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excellent rashers of fried bacon and eggs. The view in coming along had been splendid. We walked for miles and miles on dark brown heaths overlooking the Channel, with the Welsh hills beyond, and at times descended into little sheltered valleys close by the sea-side, with a smuggler's face scowling by us, and then had to ascend conical hills with a path winding up through a coppice to a barren top, like a monk's shaven crown, from one of which I pointed out to Coleridge's notice the bare masts of a vessel on the very edge of the horizon and within the red-orbed disk of the setting sun, like his own spectre-ship in the *Ancient Mariner*. At Linton the character of the sea-coast becomes more marked and rugged. There is a place called the *Valley of Rocks* (I suspect this was only the poetical name for it) bedded among precipices overhanging the sea, with rocky caverns beneath, into which the waves dash, and where the sea-gull for ever wheels its screaming flight. On the tops of these are huge stones thrown transverse, as if an earthquake had tossed them there, and behind these is a fretwork of perpendicular rocks, something like the *Giant's Causeway*. A thunder-storm came on while we were at the inn, and Coleridge was running out bare-headed to enjoy the commotion of the elements in the *Valley of Rocks*, but as if in spite, the clouds only muttered a few angry sounds, and let fall a few refreshing drops. Coleridge told me that he and Wordsworth were to have made this place the scene of a prose-tale, which was to have been in the manner of, but far superior to, the *Death of Abel*, but they had relinquished the design. In the morning of the second day, we breakfasted luxuriously in an old-fashioned parlour, on tea, toast, eggs, and honey, in the very sight of the bee-hives from which it had been taken, and a garden full of thyme and wild flowers that had produced it. On this occasion Coleridge spoke of Virgil's *Georgics*, but not well. I do not think he had much feeling for the classical or elegant. It was in this room that we found a little worn-out copy of the *Seasons*, lying in a window-seat, on which Coleridge exclaimed, 'That is true fame!' He said Thomson was a great poet, rather than a good one; his style was as meretricious as his thoughts were natural. He spoke of Cowper as the best modern poet. He said the *Lyrical Ballads* were an experiment about to be tried by him and Wordsworth, to see how far the public taste would endure poetry written in a more natural and simple style than had hitherto been attempted; totally discarding the artifices of poetical diction, and making use only of such words as had probably been common in the most ordinary language since the days of Henry II. Some comparison was introduced between Shakespear and Milton. He said 'he hardly knew which to prefer. Shakespear appeared to him a

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mere stripling in the art ; he was as tall and as strong, with infinitely more activity than Milton, but he never appeared to have come to man's estate ; or if he had, he would not have been a man, but a monster.' He spoke with contempt of Gray, and with intolerance of Pope. He did not like the versification of the latter. He observed that 'the ears of these couplet-writers might be charged with having short memories, that could not retain the harmony of whole passages.' He thought little of Junius as a writer ; he had a dislike of Dr. Johnson ; and a much higher opinion of Burke as an orator and politician, than of Fox or Pitt. He however thought him very inferior in richness of style and imagery to some of our elder prose-writers, particularly Jeremy Taylor. He liked Richardson, but not Fielding ; nor could I get him to enter into the merits of *Caleb Williams*.<sup>1</sup> In short, he was profound and discriminating with respect to those authors whom he liked, and where he gave his judgment fair play ; capricious, perverse, and prejudiced in his antipathies and distastes. We loitered on the 'ribbed sea-sands,' in such talk as this, a whole morning, and I recollect met with a curious sea-weed, of which John Chester told us the country name ! A fisherman gave Coleridge an account of a boy that had been drowned the day before, and that they had tried to save him at the risk of their own lives. He said 'he did not know how it was that they ventured, but, Sir, we have a *nature* towards one another.' This expression, Coleridge remarked to me, was a fine illustration of that theory of disinterestedness which I (in common with Butler) had adopted. I broached to him an argument of mine to prove that *likeness* was not mere association of ideas. I said that the mark in the sand put one in mind of a man's foot, not because it was part of a former impression of a man's foot (for it was quite new) but because it was like the shape of a man's foot. He assented to the justness of this distinction (which I have explained at length elsewhere, for the benefit of the curious) and John Chester listened ; not from any interest in the subject, but because he was astonished that I should be able to suggest any thing to Coleridge that he did not already know. We returned on the third morning, and Coleridge remarked the silent cottage-smoke curling up the valleys where, a few evenings before, we had seen the lights gleaming through the dark.

<sup>1</sup> He had no idea of pictures, of Claude or Raphael, and at this time I had as little as he. He sometimes gives a striking account at present of the Cartoons at Pisa, by Buffalmacco and others ; of one in particular, where Death is seen in the air brandishing his scythe, and the great and mighty of the earth shudder at his approach, while the beggars and the wretched kneel to him as their deliverer. He would of course understand so broad and fine a moral as this at any time.

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In a day or two after we arrived at Stowey, we set out, I on my return home, and he for Germany. It was a Sunday morning, and he was to preach that day for Dr. Toulmin of Taunton. I asked him if he had prepared any thing for the occasion? He said he had not even thought of the text, but should as soon as we parted. I did not go to hear him,—this was a fault,—but we met in the evening at Bridgewater. The next day we had a long day's walk to Bristol, and sat down, I recollect, by a well-side on the road, to cool ourselves and satisfy our thirst, when Coleridge repeated to me some descriptive lines from his tragedy of Remorse; which I must say became his mouth and that occasion better than they, some years after, did Mr. Elliston's and the Drury-lane boards,—

'Oh memory! shield me from the world's poor strife,  
And give those scenes thine everlasting life.'

I saw no more of him for a year or two, during which period he had been wandering in the Hartz Forest in Germany; and his return was cometary, meteorous, unlike his setting out. It was not till some time after that I knew his friends Lamb and Southey. The last always appears to me (as I first saw him) with a common-place book under his arm, and the first with a *bon-mot* in his mouth. It was at Godwin's that I met him with Holcroft and Coleridge, where they were disputing fiercely which was the best—*Man as he was*, or *man as he is to be*. 'Give me,' says Lamb, 'man as he is *not* to be.' This saying was the beginning of a friendship between us, which I believe still continues.—Enough of this for the present.

'But there is matter for another rhyme,  
And I to this may add a second tale.'

### ESSAY XII

#### OF PERSONS ONE WOULD WISH TO HAVE SEEN

'Come like shadows—so depart.'

L—— it was, I think, who suggested this subject, as well as the defence of Guy Faux, which I urged him to execute. As, however, he would undertake neither, I suppose I must do both—a task for which he would have been much fitter, no less from the temerity than the felicity of his pen—

'Never so sure our rapture to create  
As when it touch'd the brink of all we hate.'

## PERSONS ONE WOULD WISH TO HAVE SEEN

Compared with him I shall, I fear, make but a common-place piece of business of it ; but I should be loth the idea was entirely lost, and besides I may avail myself of some hints of his in the progress of it. I am sometimes, I suspect, a better reporter of the ideas of other people than expounder of my own. I pursue the one too far into paradox or mysticism ; the others I am not bound to follow farther than I like, or than seems fair and reasonable.

On the question being started, A—— said, ‘ I suppose the two first persons you would choose to see would be the two greatest names in English literature, Sir Isaac Newton and Mr. Locke ? ’ In this A——, as usual, reckoned without his host. Every one burst out a laughing at the expression of L——’s face, in which impatience was restrained by courtesy. ‘ Yes, the greatest names,’ he stammered out hastily, ‘ but they were not persons—not persons.’ —‘ Not persons ? ’ said A——, looking wise and foolish at the same time, afraid his triumph might be premature. ‘ That is,’ rejoined L——, ‘ not characters, you know. By Mr. Locke and Sir Isaac Newton, you mean the Essay on the Human Understanding, and the *Principia*, which we have to this day. Beyond their contents there is nothing personally interesting in the men. But what we want to see any one *bodily* for, is when there is something peculiar, striking in the individuals, more than we can learn from their writings, and yet are curious to know. I dare say Locke and Newton were very like Kneller’s portraits of them. But who could paint Shakespear ? ’ —‘ Ay,’ retorted A——, ‘ there it is ; then I suppose you would prefer seeing him and Milton instead ? ’ —‘ No,’ said L——, ‘ neither. I have seen so much of Shakespear on the stage and on book-stalls, in frontispieces and on mantle-pieces, that I am quite tired of the everlasting repetition : and as to Milton’s face, the impressions that have come down to us of it I do not like ; it is too starched and puritanical ; and I should be afraid of losing some of the manna of his poetry in the leaven of his countenance and the precisian’s band and gown.’ —‘ I shall guess no more,’ said A——. ‘ Who is it, then, you would like to see “ in his habit as he lived,” if you had your choice of the whole range of English literature ? ’ L—— then named Sir Thomas Brown and Fulke Greville, the friend of Sir Philip Sidney, as the two worthies whom he should feel the greatest pleasure to encounter on the floor of his apartment in their night-gown and slippers, and to exchange friendly greeting with them. At this A—— laughed outright, and conceived L—— was jesting with him ; but as no one followed his example, he thought there might be something in it, and waited for an explanation in a state of whimsical suspense. L—— then (as well as I can remember a conversation

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that passed twenty years ago—how time slips !) went on as follows. ‘The reason why I pitch upon these two authors is, that their writings are riddles, and they themselves the most mysterious of personages. They resemble the soothsayers of old, who dealt in dark hints and doubtful oracles ; and I should like to ask them the meaning of what no mortal but themselves, I should suppose, can fathom. There is Dr. Johnson, I have no curiosity, no strange uncertainty about him : he and Boswell together have pretty well let me into the secret of what passed through his mind. He and other writers like him are sufficiently explicit : my friends, whose repose I should be tempted to disturb, (were it in my power), are implicit, inextricable, inscrutable.

“ And call up him who left half-told  
The story of Cambuscan bold.”

When I look at that obscure but gorgeous prose-composition (the *Urn-burial*) I seem to myself to look into a deep abyss, at the bottom of which are hid pearls and rich treasure ; or it is like a stately labyrinth of doubt and withering speculation, and I would invoke the spirit of the author to lead me through it. Besides, who would not be curious to see the lineaments of a man who, having himself been twice married, wished that mankind were propagated like trees ! As to Fulke Greville, he is like nothing but one of his own “ Prologues spoken by the ghost of an old king of Ormus,” a truly formidable and inviting personage : his style is apocalyptical, cabalistical, a knot worthy of such an apparition to untie ; and for the unravelling a passage or two, I would stand the brunt of an encounter with so portentous a commentator !—‘ I am afraid in that case,’ said A—, ‘ that if the mystery were once cleared up, the merit might be lost ; ’—and turning to me, whispered a friendly apprehension, that while L— continued to admire these old crabbed authors, he would never become a popular writer. Dr. Donne was mentioned as a writer of the same period, with a very interesting countenance, whose history was singular, and whose meaning was often quite as *uncomeatable*, without a personal citation from the dead, as that of any of his contemporaries. The volume was produced ; and while some one was expatiating on the exquisite simplicity and beauty of the portrait prefixed to the old edition, A— got hold of the poetry, and exclaiming ‘ What have we here ? ’ read the following :—

‘ Here lies a She-Sun and a He-Moon there,  
She give the best light to his sphere,  
Or each is both and all, and so  
They unto one another nothing owe.’

There was no resisting this, till L—, seizing the volume, turned

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to the beautiful 'Lines to his Mistress,' dissuading her from accompanying him abroad, and read them with suffused features and a faltering tongue.

' By our first strange and fatal interview,  
By all desires which thereof did ensue,  
By our long starving hopes, by that remorse  
Which my words' masculine persuasive force  
Begot in thee, and by the memory  
Of hurts, which spies and rivals threaten'd me,  
I calmly beg. But by thy father's wrath,  
By all pains which want and divorcement hath,  
I conjure thee; and all the oaths which I  
And thou have sworn to seal joint constancy  
Here I unswear, and overswear them thus,  
Thou shalt not love by ways so dangerous.  
Temper, oh fair Love! love's impetuous rage,  
Be my true mistress still, not my feign'd Page;  
I'll go, and, by thy kind leave, leave behind  
Thee, only worthy to nurse in my mind.  
Thirst to come back; oh, if thou die before,  
My soul from other lands to thee shall soar.  
Thy (else Almighty) beauty cannot move  
Rage from the seas, nor thy love teach them love,  
Nor tame wild Boreas' harshness; thou hast read  
How roughly he in pieces shiver'd  
Fair Orithea, whom he swore he lov'd.  
Fall ill or good, 'tis madness to have prov'd  
Dangers unurg'd: Feed on this flattery,  
That absent lovers one with th' other be.  
Dissemble nothing, not a boy; nor change  
Thy boy's habit, nor mind; be not strange  
To thyself only. All will spy in thy face  
A blushing, womanly, discovering grace.  
Richly cloth'd apes are called apes, and as soon  
Eclips'd as bright we call the moon the moon.  
Men of France, changeable cameleons,  
Spittles of diseases, shops of fashions,  
Love's fuellers, and the rightest company  
Of players, which upon the world's stage be,  
Will quickly know thee. . . . O stay here! for thee  
England is only a worthy gallery,  
To walk in expectation; till from thence  
Our greatest King call thee to his presence.  
When I am gone, dream me some happiness,  
Nor let thy looks our long hid love confess,  
Nor praise, nor dispraise me; nor bless, nor curse  
Openly love's force, nor in bed fright thy nurse  
With midnight startings, crying out, Oh, oh,  
Nurse, oh, my love is slain, I saw him go  
O'er the white Alps alone; I saw him, I,  
Assail'd, fight, taken, stabb'd, bleed, fall, and die.  
Augur me better chance, except dread Jove  
Think it enough for me to have had thy love.'

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Some one then inquired of L—— if we could not see from the window the Temple-walk in which Chaucer used to take his exercise; and on his name being put to the vote, I was pleased to find that there was a general sensation in his favour in all but A——, who said something about the ruggedness of the metre, and even objected to the quaintness of the orthography. I was vexed at this superficial gloss, pertinaciously reducing every thing to its own trite level, and asked 'if he did not think it would be worth while to scan the eye that had first greeted the Muse in that dim twilight and early dawn of English literature; to see the head, round which the visions of fancy must have played like gleams of inspiration or a sudden glory; to watch those lips that "lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came"—as by a miracle, or as if the dumb should speak? Nor was it alone that he had been the first to tune his native tongue (however imperfectly to modern ears); but he was himself a noble, manly character, standing before his age and striving to advance it; a pleasant humourist withal, who has not only handed down to us the living manners of his time, but had, no doubt, store of curious and quaint devices, and would make as hearty a companion as Mine Host of Tabard. His interview with Petrarch is fraught with interest. Yet I would rather have seen Chaucer in company with the author of the Decameron, and have heard them exchange their best stories together, the Squire's Tale against the Story of the Falcon, the Wife of Bath's Prologue against the Adventures of Friar Albert. How fine to see the high mysterious brow which learning then wore, relieved by the gay, familiar tone of men of the world, and by the courtesies of genius. Surely, the thoughts and feelings which passed through the minds of these great revivers of learning, these Cadmuses who sowed the teeth of letters, must have stamped an expression on their features, as different from the moderns as their books, and well worth the perusal. Dante,' I continued, 'is as interesting a person as his own Ugolino, one whose lineaments curiosity would as eagerly devour in order to penetrate his spirit, and the only one of the Italian poets I should care much to see. There is a fine portrait of Ariosto by no less a hand than Titian's; light, Moorish, spirited, but not answering our idea. The same artist's large colossal profile of Peter Aretine is the only likeness of the kind that has the effect of conversing with "the mighty dead," and this is truly spectral, ghastly, necromantic.' L—— put it to me if I should like to see Spenser as well as Chaucer; and I answered without hesitation, 'No; for that his beauties were ideal, visionary, not palpable or personal, and therefore connected with less curiosity about the man. His poetry was the essence of romance, a very halo round the bright orb of fancy; and the bringing

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in the individual might dissolve the charm. No tones of voice could come up to the mellifluous cadence of his verse; no form but of a winged angel could vie with the airy shapes he has described. He was (to our apprehensions) rather "a creature of the element, that lived in the rainbow and played in the plighted clouds," than an ordinary mortal. Or if he did appear, I should wish it to be as a mere vision, like one of his own pageants, and that he should pass by unquestioned like a dream or sound—

—"That was Arion crown'd :  
So went he playing on the wat'ry plain !"

Captain B. muttered something about Columbus, and M. C. hinted at the Wandering Jew; but the last was set aside as spurious, and the first made over to the New World.

'I should like,' said Miss L——, 'to have seen Pope talking with Patty Blount; and I *have* seen Goldsmith.' Every one turned round to look at Miss L——, as if by so doing they too could get a sight of Goldsmith.

'Where,' asked a harsh croaking voice, 'was Dr. Johnson in the years 1745-6? He did not write any thing that we know of, nor is there any account of him in Boswell during those two years. Was he in Scotland with the Pretender? He seems to have passed through the scenes in the Highlands in company with Boswell many years after "with lack-lustre eye," yet as if they were familiar to him, or associated in his mind with interests that he durst not explain. If so, it would be an additional reason for my liking him; and I would give something to have seen him seated in the tent with the youthful Majesty of Britain, and penning the Proclamation to all true subjects and adherents of the legitimate Government.'

'I thought,' said A——, turning short round upon L——, 'that you of the Lake School did not like Pope?'—'Not like Pope! My dear sir, you must be under a mistake—I can read him over and over for ever!'—'Why certainly, the "Essay on Man" must be allowed to be a master-piece.'—'It may be so, but I seldom look into it.'—'Oh! then it's his Satires you admire?'—'No, not his Satires, but his friendly Epistles and his compliments.'—'Compliments! I did not know he ever made any.'—'The finest,' said L——, 'that were ever paid by the wit of man. Each of them is worth an estate for life—nay, is an immortality. There is that superb one to Lord Cornbury:

"Despise low joys, low gains;  
Disdain whatever Cornbury disdain;  
Be virtuous, and be happy for your pains."



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‘Was there ever more artful insinuation of idolatrous praise? And then that noble apotheosis of his friend Lord Mansfield (however little deserved), when, speaking of the House of Lords, he adds—

“Conspicuous scene! another yet is nigh,  
(More silent far) where kings and poets lie;  
Where Murray (long enough his country’s pride)  
Shall be no more than Tully or than Hyde!”

‘And with what a fine turn of indignant flattery he addresses Lord Bolingbroke—

“Why rail they then, if but one wreath of mine,  
Oh! all accomplish’d St. John, deck thy shrine?”

‘Or turn,’ continued L——, with a slight hectic on his cheek and his eye glistening, ‘to his list of early friends:

“But why then publish? Granville the polite,  
And knowing Walsh, would tell me I could write;  
Well-natured Garth inflamed with early praise,  
And Congreve loved and Swift endured my lays:  
The courtly Talbot, Somers, Sheffield read,  
Ev’n mitred Rochester would nod the head;  
And St. John’s self (great Dryden’s friend before)  
Received with open arms one poet more.  
Happy my studies, if by these approved!  
Happier their author, if by these beloved!  
From these the world will judge of men and books,  
Not from the Burnets, Oldmixons, and Cooks.”

Here his voice totally failed him, and throwing down the book, he said, ‘Do you think I would not wish to have been friends with such a man as this?’

‘What say you to Dryden?’—‘He rather made a show of himself, and courted popularity in that lowest temple of Fame, a coffee-house, so as in some measure to vulgarise one’s idea of him. Pope, on the contrary, reached the very *beau idéal* of what a poet’s life should be; and his fame while living seemed to be an emanation from that which was to circle his name after death. He was so far enviable (and one would feel proud to have witnessed the rare spectacle in him) that he was almost the only poet and man of genius who met with his reward on this side of the tomb, who realised in friends, fortune, the esteem of the world, the most sanguine hopes of a youthful ambition, and who found that sort of patronage from the great during his lifetime which they would be thought anxious to bestow upon him after his death. Read Gay’s verses to him on his supposed return from Greece, after his translation of Homer was finished, and say if you would not gladly join the bright procession

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that welcomed him home, or see it once more land at Whitehall-stairs.'—'Still,' said Miss L——, 'I would rather have seen him talking with Patty Blount, or riding by in a coronet-coach with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu!'

P——, who was deep in a game of piquet at the other end of the room, whispered to M. C. to ask if Junius would not be a fit person to invoke from the dead. 'Yes,' said L——, 'provided he would agree to lay aside his mask.'

We were now at a stand for a short time, when Fielding was mentioned as a candidate: only one, however, seconded the proposition. 'Richardson?'—'By all means, but only to look at him through the glass-door of his back-shop, hard at work upon one of his novels (the most extraordinary contrast that ever was presented between an author and his works), but not to let him come behind his counter lest he should want you to turn customer, nor to go upstairs with him, lest he should offer to read the first manuscript of Sir Charles Grandison, which was originally written in eight and twenty volumes octavo, or get out the letters of his female correspondents, to prove that Joseph Andrews was low.'

There was but one statesman in the whole of English history that any one expressed the least desire to see—Oliver Cromwell, with his fine, frank, rough, pimply face, and wily policy;—and one enthusiast, John Bunyan, the immortal author of the Pilgrim's Progress. It seemed that if he came into the room, dreams would follow him, and that each person would nod under his golden cloud, 'nigh-sphered in Heaven,' a canopy as strange and stately as any in Homer.

Of all persons near our own time, Garrick's name was received with the greatest enthusiasm, who was proposed by J. L——. He presently superseded both Hogarth and Handel, who had been talked of, but then it was on condition that he should act in tragedy and comedy, in the play and the farce, Lear and Wildair and Abel Dragger. What a *sight for sore eyes* that would be! Who would not part with a year's income at least, almost with a year of his natural life, to be present at it? Besides, as he could not act alone, and recitations are unsatisfactory things, what a troop he must bring with him—the silver-tongued Barry, and Quin, and Shuter and Weston, and Mrs. Clive and Mrs. Pritchard, of whom I have heard my father speak as so great a favourite when he was young! This would indeed be a revival of the dead, the restoring of art; and so much the more desirable, as such is the lurking scepticism mingled with our overstrained admiration of past excellence, that though we have the speeches of Burke, the portraits of Reynolds, the writings of Goldsmith, and the conversation of Johnson, to show what people

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could do at that period, and to confirm the universal testimony to the merits of Garrick; yet, as it was before our time, we have our misgivings, as if he was probably after all little better than a Bartlemy-fair actor, dressed out to play Macbeth in a scarlet coat and laced cocked-hat. For one, I should like to have seen and heard with my own eyes and ears. Certainly, by all accounts, if any one was ever moved by the true histrionic *æstus*, it was Garrick. When he followed the Ghost in Hamlet, he did not drop the sword, as most actors do behind the scenes, but kept the point raised the whole way round, so fully was he possessed with the idea, or so anxious not to lose sight of his part for a moment. Once at a splendid dinner-party at Lord ——'s, they suddenly missed Garrick, and could not imagine what was become of him, till they were drawn to the window by the convulsive screams and peals of laughter of a young negro boy, who was rolling on the ground in an ecstasy of delight to see Garrick mimicking a turkey-cock in the court-yard, with his coat-tail stuck out behind, and in a seeming flutter of feathered rage and pride. Of our party only two persons present had seen the British Roscius; and they seemed as willing as the rest to renew their acquaintance with their old favourite.

We were interrupted in the hey-day and mid-career of this fanciful speculation, by a grumbler in a corner, who declared it was a shame to make all this rout about a mere player and farce-writer, to the neglect and exclusion of the fine old dramatists, the contemporaries and rivals of Shakespear. L—— said he had anticipated this objection when he had named the author of Mustapha and Alaham; and out of caprice insisted upon keeping him to represent the set, in preference to the wild hair-brained enthusiast Kit Marlowe; to the sexton of St. Ann's, Webster, with his melancholy yew-trees and death's-heads; to Deckar, who was but a garrulous proser; to the voluminous Heywood; and even to Beaumont and Fletcher, whom we might offend by complimenting the wrong author on their joint productions. Lord Brook, on the contrary, stood quite by himself, or in Cowley's words, was 'a vast species alone.' Some one hinted at the circumstance of his being a lord, which rather startled L——, but he said a *ghost* would perhaps dispense with strict etiquette, on being regularly addressed by his title. Ben Jonson divided our suffrages pretty equally. Some were afraid he would begin to traduce Shakspeare, who was not present to defend himself. 'If he grows disagreeable,' it was whispered aloud, 'there is H—— can match him.' At length, his romantic visit to Drummond of Hawthornden was mentioned, and turned the scale in his favour.

L—— inquired if there was any one that was hanged that I would

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choose to mention? And I answered, Eugene Aram.<sup>1</sup> The name of the 'Admirable Crichton' was suddenly started as a splendid example of *waste* talents, so different from the generality of his countrymen. This choice was mightily approved by a North-Briton present, who declared himself descended from that prodigy of learning and accomplishment, and said he had family-plate in his possession as vouchers for the fact, with the initials A. C.—*Admirable Crichton!* R—— laughed or rather roared as heartily at this as I should think he has done for many years.

The last-named Mitre-courtier<sup>2</sup> then wished to know whether there were any metaphysicians to whom one might be tempted to apply the wizard spell? I replied, there were only six in modern times deserving the name—Hobbes, Berkeley, Butler, Hartley, Hume, Leibnitz; and perhaps Jonathan Edwards, a Massachusetts man.<sup>3</sup> As to the French, who talked fluently of having *created* this science, there was not a title in any of their writings, that was not to be found literally in the authors I had mentioned. (Horne Tooke, who might have a claim to come in under the head of Grammar, was still living.) None of these names seemed to excite much interest, and I did not plead for the re-appearance of those who might be thought best fitted by the abstracted nature of their studies for their present spiritual and disembodied state, and who, even while on this living stage, were nearly divested of common flesh and blood. As A—— with an uneasy fidgetty face was about to put some question about Mr. Locke and Dugald Stewart, he was prevented by M. C. who observed, 'If C—— was here, he would undoubtedly be for having up those profound and redoubted scholiasts, Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus.' I said this might be fair enough in him who had read or fancied he had read the original works, but I did not see how we could have any right to call up these authors to give an account of themselves in person, till we had looked into their writings.

By this time it should seem that some rumour of our whimsical deliberation had got wind, and had disturbed the *irritabile genus* in

<sup>1</sup> See Newgate Calendar for 1758.

<sup>2</sup> L—— at this time occupied chambers in Mitre-court, Fleet Street.

<sup>3</sup> Lord Bacon is not included in this list, nor do I know where he should come in. It is not easy to make room for him and his reputation together. This great and celebrated man in some of his works recommends it to pour a bottle of claret into the ground of a morning, and to stand over it, inhaling the perfumes. So he sometimes enriched the dry and barren soil of speculation with the fine aromatic spirit of his genius. His 'Essays' and his 'Advancement of Learning' are works of vast depth and scope of observation. The last, though it contains no positive discoveries, is a noble chart of the human intellect, and a guide to all future inquirers.

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their shadowy abodes, for we received messages from several candidates that we had just been thinking of. Gray declined our invitation, though he had not yet been asked : Gay offered to come and bring in his hand the Duchess of Bolton, the original Polly : Steele and Addison left their cards as Captain Sentry and Sir Roger de Coverley : Swift came in and sat down without speaking a word, and quitted the room as abruptly : Otway and Chatterton were seen lingering on the opposite side of the Styx, but could not muster enough between them to pay Charon his fare : Thomson fell asleep in the boat, and was rowed back again—and Burns sent a low fellow, one John Barleycorn, an old companion of his who had conducted him to the other world, to say that he had during his lifetime been drawn out of his retirement as a show, only to be made an exciseman of, and that he would rather remain where he was. He desired, however, to shake hands by his representative—the hand, thus held out, was in a burning fever, and shook prodigiously.

The room was hung round with several portraits of eminent painters. While we were debating whether we should demand speech with these masters of mute eloquence, whose features were so familiar to us, it seemed that all at once they glided from their frames, and seated themselves at some little distance from us. There was Leonardo with his majestic beard and watchful eye, having a bust of Archimedes before him ; next him was Raphael's graceful head turned round to the Fornarina ; and on his other side was Lucretia Borgia, with calm, golden locks ; Michael Angelo had placed the model of St. Peter's on the table before him ; Corregio had an angel at his side ; Titian was seated with his Mistress between himself and Giorgioni ; Guido was accompanied by his own Aurora, who took a dice-box from him ; Claude held a mirror in his hand ; Rubens patted a beautiful panther (led in by a satyr) on the head ; Vandyke appeared as his own Paris, and Rembrandt was hid under furs, gold chains and jewels, which Sir Joshua eyed closely, holding his hand so as to shade his forehead. Not a word was spoken ; and as we rose to do them homage, they still presented the same surface to the view. Not being *bonâ-fide* representations of living people, we got rid of the splendid apparitions by signs and dumb show. As soon as they had melted into thin air, there was a loud noise at the outer door, and we found it was Giotto, Cimabue, and Ghirlandaio, who had been raised from the dead by their earnest desire to see their illustrious successors—

' Whose names on earth  
In Fame's eternal records live for aye ! '

Finding them gone, they had no ambition to be seen after them, and

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mournfully withdrew. 'Egad!' said L——, 'those are the very fellows I should like to have had some talk with, to know how they could see to paint when all was dark around them?'

'But shall we have nothing to say,' interrogated G. D——, 'to the Legend of Good Women?'—'Name, name, Mr. D——,' cried R—— in a boisterous tone of friendly exultation, 'name as many as you please, without reserve or fear of molestation!' D—— was perplexed between so many amiable recollections, that the name of the lady of his choice expired in a pensive whiff of his pipe; and L—— impatiently declared for the Duchess of Newcastle. Mrs. Hutchinson was no sooner mentioned, than she carried the day from the Duchess. We were the less solicitous on this subject of filling up the posthumous lists of Good Women, as there was already one in the room as good, as sensible, and in all respects as exemplary, as the best of them could be for their lives! 'I should like vastly to have seen Ninon de l'Enclos,' said that incomparable person; and this immediately put us in mind that we had neglected to pay honour due to our friends on the other side of the Channel: Voltaire, the patriarch of levity, and Rousseau, the father of sentiment, Montaigne and Rabelais (great in wisdom and in wit), Molière and that illustrious group that are collected round him (in the print of that subject) to hear him read his comedy of the *Tartuffe* at the house of Ninon; Racine, La Fontaine, Rochefoucault, St. Evremont, &c.

'There is one person,' said a shrill, querulous voice, 'I would rather see than all these—Don Quixote!'

'Come, come!' said R——; 'I thought we should have no heroes, real or fabulous. What say you, Mr. L——? Are you for eking out your shadowy list with such names as Alexander, Julius Cæsar, Tamerlane, or Ghengis Khan?'—'Excuse me,' said L——, 'on the subject of characters in active life, plotters and disturbers of the world, I have a crotchet of my own, which I beg leave to reserve.'—'No, no! come, out with your worthies!'—'What do you think of Guy Faux and Judas Iscariot?' R—— turned an eye upon him like a wild Indian, but cordial and full of smothered glee. 'Your most exquisite reason!' was echoed on all sides; and A—— thought that L—— had now fairly entangled himself. 'Why, I cannot but think,' retorted he of the wistful countenance, 'that Guy Faux, that poor fluttering annual scare-crow of straw and rags, is an ill-used gentleman. I would give something to see him sitting pale and emaciated, surrounded by his matches and his barrels of gunpowder, and expecting the moment that was to transport him to Paradise for his heroic self-devotion; but if I say any more, there is that fellow H—— will make something of it. And as to Judas

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Iscariot, my reason is different. I would fain see the face of him, who, having dipped his hand in the same dish with the Son of Man, could afterwards betray him. I have no conception of such a thing; nor have I ever seen any picture (not even Leonardo's very fine one) that gave me the least idea of it.'—'You have said enough, Mr. L——, to justify your choice.'

'Oh! ever right, Menenius,—ever right!'

'There is only one other person I can ever think of after this,' continued R——; but without mentioning a name that once put on a semblance of mortality. 'If Shakespear was to come into the room, we should all rise up to meet him; but if that person was to come into it, we should all fall down and try to kiss the hem of his garment!'

As a lady present seemed now to get uneasy at the turn the conversation had taken, we rose up to go. The morning broke with that dim, dubious light by which Giotto, Cimabue, and Ghirlandaio must have seen to paint their earliest works; and we parted to meet again and renew similar topics at night, the next night, and the night after that, till that night overspread Europe which saw no dawn. The same event, in truth, broke up our little Congress that broke up the great one. But that was to meet again: our deliberations have never been resumed.

### ESSAY XIII

#### ENGLISH STUDENTS AT ROME

'No wher so besy a man as he ther n'as,  
And yet he semed besier than he was.'

*Prologue to the Canterbury Tales.*

ROME is of all places the worst to study in, for the same reason that it is the best to lounge in. There is no end of objects to divert and distract the mind. If a person has no other view than to pass away his time, to fill his portfolio or common-place book, or to improve his general taste and knowledge, he may find employment and amusement here for ever: if ever he wishes to do any thing, he should fly from it as he would from the plague. There is a species of *malaria* hanging over it, which infects both the mind and the body. It has been the seat of too much activity and luxury formerly, not to have produced a correspondent torpor and stagnation (both in the physical and moral world) as the natural consequence at present. If

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Necessity is the mother of Invention it must be stifled in the birth here, where every thing is already done and provided to your hand that you could possibly wish for or think of. You have no stimulus to exertion, for you have but to open your eyes and see, in order to live in a continued round of delight and admiration. The doors of a splendid banquet of all that is rare and rich in art stand ready open to you, you are invited to enter in and feast your senses and your imagination *gratis*; and it is not likely that, under these circumstances, you will try to earn a scanty meal by hard labour, or even to gain an appetite by wholesome exercise. The same thing occurs here that is objected to the inhabitants of great cities in general. They have too many objects always passing before them, that engage their attention and fill up their time, to allow them either much leisure or inclination for thought or study. Rome is the great metropolis of Art; and it is somewhat to be feared that those who take up their abode there will become, like other *cockneys*, ignorant, conceited, and superficial.

The queen and mistress of the ancient and the modern world claims such a transcendent superiority over the mind, that you look down as it were from this eminence on the rest of mankind; and from the contempt you feel for others, come to have a mighty good opinion of yourself. The *being at Rome* (both from the sound of the name and the monuments of genius and magnificence she has to show) is of itself a sufficient distinction without *doing* anything there. After viewing some splendid relic of antiquity, the efforts of contemporary art sink into insignificance and nothingness: but we are disposed to occupy the vacant space, the clear ground thus created, with our own puny pretensions and aspiring fancies. As this indulgence of alternate enthusiasm and reflected self-complacency is a never-failing source of gratification, and a much less laborious one than the embodying our vain imaginations in practice, we easily rest in the means as the end; and without making any farther progress, are perfectly satisfied with what others have done, and what we *are* to do. We indeed wear the livery, and follow in the train of greatness; and, like other livery-servants, despise the rabble, growing more lazy, affected, luxurious, insolent, trifling, and incapable of gaining an honest livelihood every hour. We are the dupes of flattering appearances and of false comparisons between ourselves and others. We think that a familiarity with great names and great works is an approach to an equality with them; or fondly proceed to establish our own pretensions on the ruins of others, not considering that if it were not what we *do*, but what we *see*, that is the standard of proficiency, thousands of spectators might give themselves the same airs of self-importance on the



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same idle score, and treat us as barbarians and poor creatures, if they had our impertinence and presumption. We stand before a picture of some great master, and fancy there is nothing between him and us : we walk under the Dome of St. Peter's, and it seems to grow larger with a consciousness of our presence and with the amplitude of our conceptions. All this is fine as well as easy work ; nor can it be supposed that we shall be in any haste to exchange this waking dream for the drudgery of mechanical exertion, or for the mortifying evidence of the disparity between our theory and our practice. All the great names and schools of art stand proxy for us, till we choose to take the responsibility on our own shoulders ; and as it happens in other cases, we have no objection to make our faith in the merits of others a convenient substitute for good works and zealous exertions in the cause. Yet a common stone-mason or sign-painter, who understands the use of his tools and sticks close to his business, has more resemblance to Raphael or Michael Angelo, and stands a better chance of achieving something great, than those who visit the Corridors of the Vatican or St. Peter's once a day, return home, spend the evening in extolling what they have witnessed, begin a sketch or a plan and lay it aside, and saunter out again the next day in search of fresh objects to dissipate *ennui* and kill the time without being obliged to draw for one instant on their own resources or resolution.

Numberless are the instances of those who go on thus, while vanity and indolence together are confirmed into an incurable disease, the sleek, pampered tone of which they mistake for the marks of taste and genius. What other result can be expected ? If they do any thing, it is all over with them. They not only strip off the mask from their own self-love, but expose themselves to the pity and derision of their competitors, whom they before affected to despise. Within 'the vast, the unbounded' circle of pretension, of vapouring, and innuendo, they are safe : the future *would-be* Raphaels, Correggios, &c. have nothing to dread from criticism while they hatch their embryo conquests and prepare a distant triumph : no one can apply Ithuriel's spear to detect what is confessedly a shadow. But they must waive this privilege when they descend into the common lists ; and in proportion as they have committed themselves in conversation or in idle fancy, they are ashamed to commit themselves in reality, because any thing they could do at first must unavoidably fall short of that high standard of excellence, which (if at all) can only be attained by the labour and experience of a whole life. Their real incapacity shrinks from the pomp of their professions. The magnificence of the air-drawn edifice of their reputation prevents them from laying the first stone in downright earnest ; and they have no other mode of

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excusing the delay, and the indecision it betokens, than by assuming still greater delicacy of taste and loftiness of ambition, and by thus aggrandising their unfounded schemes, rendering their execution more hopeless and impossible. Should they begin something, a new thought strikes them, and they throw aside a very promising sketch to enlarge their canvass and proceed upon a scale more worthy of them : to this enlarged design some object is indispensably necessary, which is unluckily wanting :—thus time is gained, a new lease of credit is granted, and instead of putting the last hand to the original sketch, they take merit to themselves for the enlargement of their views and the determined pursuit of the higher walk of art. Meantime, the smaller picture stands unfinished on the easel, and nominal commissions pour in for new and more extended projects. Then comes a new secret of colouring, a new principle of grouping, a new theory, a new book—always something to draw off the attention from its proper object, and to substitute laborious idleness for true pains and profitable study. Then a picture is to be copied as a preparation for undertaking a given subject, or a library to be ransacked to ascertain the precise truth of the historical facts or the exact conception of the characters; and after a year thus lost in desultory and scrupulous researches, the whole plan is given up, either because no one comes forward effectually to patronise it, or because some more tempting prospect is opened into the realms of art and high renown. Then again friends are to be consulted; some admire one thing, some another; some recommend the study of nature, others are all for the antique; some insist on the utmost finishing, others explode all attention to *minutiæ*; artists find one fault, the uninstructed spectator another; and in going backwards and forwards from one to another, listening to new reasons and new objections, in reconciling all parties and pleasing none, life is passed in endless doubts and difficulties, and we discover that our most valuable years have fled in busy preparations to do—nothing. It is then too late, and we consume the remainder in vain regrets and querulous repinings, as we did the flower and marrow of our time in fanciful speculation and egregious trifling. The student should of all things steer clear of the character of the dilettanti—it is the rock on which he is most likely to split. Pleasure, or extravagance, or positive idleness, are less dangerous; for these he knows to be fatal to his success, and he indulges in them with his eyes open. But in the other case, he is thrown off his guard by the most plausible appearances. Vanity here puts on the garb of humility, indecision of long-sighted perseverance, and habitual sloth of constant industry. Few will reproach us, while we are accumulating the means of ultimate success, with neglecting the end; or

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remind us that though art is long, life is short. It is true, that art is a long and steep ascent, but we must learn to scale it by regular, practical stages, and not by a hasty wish or still more futile calculations and measurements of the height. We can only indeed be sensible of its real height by the actual progress we have made, and by the glorious views that gradually dawn upon us, the cheerers of our way, and the harbingers of our success. It is only by attempting something that we feel where our strength lies, and if we have what travellers call a *forte journée* to perform, it is the more indispensable that we should set out betimes and not loiter on the road. What is well done is the consequence of doing much—perfection is the reward of numberless attempts and failures. The chief requisites are a practised hand and eye, and an active imagination. Indolent taste and passive acquirements are not enough. They will neither supply our wants while living, nor enable us to leave a name behind us after we are dead. Farther, the brooding over excellence with a feverish importunity, and stimulating ourselves to great things by an abstract love of fame, can do little good, and may do much harm. It is, no doubt, a very delightful and enviable state of mind to be in, but neither a very arduous nor a very profitable one. Nothing remarkable was ever done, except by following up the impulse of our own minds, by grappling with difficulties and improving our advantages, not by dreaming over our own premature triumphs or doating on the achievements of others.

If it were nothing else, the having the works of the great masters of former times always before us is enough to discourage and defeat all ordinary attempts. How many elegant designs and meritorious conceptions must lie buried under the high arched porticoes of the Vatican! The walls of the Sistine Chapel must fall upon the head of inferior pretensions and crush them. What minor pencil can stand in competition with the 'petrific mace' that painted the Last Judgment? What fancy can expand into blooming grace and beauty by the side of the Heliodorus? What is it *we* could add, or what occasion, what need, what pretence is there to add anything to the art after this? Who in the presence of such glorious works does not wish to shrink into himself, or to live only for them? Is it not a profanation to think he can hope to do any thing like them? And who, having once seen, can think with common patience or with zealous enthusiasm of doing aught but treading in their footsteps? If the artist has a genius and turn of mind at all similar, they baulk and damp him by their imposing stately height: if his talent lies in a different and humbler walk, they divert and unsettle his mind. If he is contented to look on and admire, a vague and unattainable idea of

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excellence floats before his imagination, and tantalises him with equally vain hopes and wishes. If he copies, he becomes a mechanic ; and besides, runs another risk. He finds he can with ease produce in three days an incomparably finer effect than he could do with all his efforts, and after any length of time, in working without assistance. He is therefore disheartened and put out of countenance, and returns with reluctance to original composition : for where is the sense of taking ten times the pains and undergoing ten times the anxiety to produce not one hundredth part of the effect ? When I was young, I made one or two studies of strong contrasts of light and shade in the manner of Rembrandt with great care and (as it was thought) with some success. But after I had once copied some of Titian's portraits in the Louvre, my ambition took a higher flight. Nothing would serve my turn but heads like Titian—Titian expressions, Titian complexions, Titian dresses ; and as I could not find these where I was, after one or two abortive attempts to engraft Italian art on English nature, I flung away my pencil in disgust and despair. Otherwise I might have done as well as others, I dare say, but from a desire to do too well. I did not consider that Nature is always the great thing, or that 'Pan is a god, Apollo is no more !'—Nor is the student repelled and staggered in his progress only by the degree of excellence, but distracted and puzzled by the variety of incompatible claims upon his ingenuous and sincere enthusiasm. While any one attends to what circumstances bring in his way, or keeps in the path that is prompted by his own genius (such as it may be), he stands a fair chance, by directing all his efforts to one point, to compass the utmost object of his ambition. But what likelihood is there of this from the moment that all the great schools, and all the most precious *chef-d'œuvres* of art, at once unveil their diversified attractions to his astonished sight ? What Protestant, for instance, can be properly and permanently imbued with the fervent devotion or saint-like purity of the Catholic religion, or hope to transfer the pride, pomp, and pageantry of that detested superstition to his own canvass, with real feeling and *con amore* ? What modern can enter fully into the spirit of the ancient Greek mythology, or rival the symmetry of its naked forms ? What single individual will presume to unite 'the colouring of Titian, the drawing of Raphael, the airs of Guido, the learning of Poussin, the purity of Domenichino, the *correggescity* of Correggio, and the grand contour of Michael Angelo,' in the same composition ? Yet those who are familiar with all these different styles and their excellences, require them all. Mere originality will not suffice, it is quaint and Gothic—common-place perfection is still more intolerable, it is insipid and mechanical. Modern Art is indeed like the fabled

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Sphinx, that imposes impossible tasks on her votaries, and as she clasps them to her bosom pierces them to the heart. Let a man have a turn and taste for landscape, she whispers him that nothing is truly interesting but the human face: if he makes a successful *debut* in portrait, he soon (under the same auspices) aspires to history; but if painting in its highest walks seems within his reach, she then plays off the solid forms and shining surfaces of sculpture before his eyes, urging him to combine the simple grandeur of the Antique with Canova's polished elegance; or he is haunted with the majestic effects and scientific rules of architecture, and ruined temples and broken fragments nod in his bewildered imagination! What is to be done in this case? What generally is done—Nothing. Amidst so many pretensions, how is choice possible? Or where all are equally objects of taste and knowledge, how rest satisfied without giving some proofs of our practical proficiency in all? To mould a clay-figure that if finished might surpass the Venus; to make a pen-and-ink drawing after a splendid piece of colouring by Titian; to give the picturesque effect of the arch of some ancient aqueduct as seen by moonlight; some such meagre abstractions and flimsy refinements in art are among the *spolia opima* and patch-work trophies offered to the presiding Goddess of spleen, idleness, and affectation!—

Nothing can be conceived more unpropitious to 'the high endeavour and the glad success,' than the whole aspect and character of ancient Rome, both what remains as well as what is lost of it. Is this the Eternal City? Is this she that (amazon or votaress) was twice mistress of the world? Is this the country of the Scipios, the Cincinnati and the Gracchi, of Cato and of Brutus, of Pompey and of Sylla, is this the Capitol where Julius Cæsar fell, where Cicero thundered against Catiline, the scene of combats and of triumphs, and through whose gates kings and nations were led captive by the side of their conquerors' chariot-wheels? All is vanished. The names alone remain to haunt the memory: the spirits of the mighty dead mock us, as we pass. The genius of Antiquity bestrides the place like a Colossus. Ruin here sits on her pedestal of pride, and reads a mortifying lecture to human vanity. We see all that ages, nations, a subjected world conspired to build up to magnificence, overthrown or hastening fast into decay; empire, religion, freedom, Gods, and men trampled in the dust or consigned to the regions of lasting oblivion or of shadowy renown; and what are we that in this mighty wreck we should think of cultivating our petty talents and advancing our individual pretensions? Rome is the very tomb of ancient greatness, the grave of modern presumption. The mere consciousness of the presence in which we stand ought to abash and overawe our

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pragmatical self-conceit. Men here seem no better than insects crawling about : everything has a Lilliputian and insignificant appearance. Our big projects, our bloated egotism, shrink up within the enormous shadow of transitory power and splendour : the sinews of desire relax and moulder away, and the fever of youthful ambition is turned into a cold ague-fit. There is a languor in the air ; and the contagion of listless apathy infects the hopes that are yet unborn.—As to what remains of actual power and spiritual authority, Hobbes said well, that ‘Popery was the ghost of the Roman Empire, sitting upon the ruins of Rome.’ The only flourishing thing in Rome (and that is only half flourishing) is an old woman ; and who would wish to be an old woman ? Greatness here is greatness in masquerade—one knows not whether to pity or laugh at it—and the Cardinals’ red legs peeping out like the legs of some outlandish stuffed bird in a Museum, excite much the same curiosity and surprise. No one (no Englishman at least) can be much edified by the array of distinctions, that denote a consummation of art or weakness. Still, perhaps, to the idle and frivolous there may be something alluring in this meretricious mummary and splendour, as moths are attracted to the taper’s blaze, and perish in it !

There is a great deal of gossiping and stuff going on at Rome. There are *Conversations*, where the Cardinals go and admire the fair complexions and innocent smiles of the young Englishwomen ; and where the English students who have the *entrée* look at the former with astonishment as a sort of non-descripts, and are not the less taken with their pretty countrywomen for being the objects of attention to Popish Cardinals. Then come the tittle-tattle of who and who’s together, the quaint and piquant inter-national gallantries, and the story of the greatest beauty in Rome said to be married to an English gentleman—how odd and at the same time how encouraging ! Then the manners and customs of Rome excite a buzz of curiosity, and the English imagination is always recurring to and teased with that luckless question of *cicisbeism*. Some affect to be candid, while others persist in their original blindness, and would set on foot a reform of the Roman metropolis—on the model of the British one ! In short, there is a great deal too much tampering and dalliance with subjects, with which we have little acquaintance and less business. All this passes the time, and relieves the mind either after the fatigue or in the absence of more serious study. Then there is to be an Academy Meeting at night, and a debate is to take place whether the Academy ought not to have a President, and if so, whether the President of the Academy at Rome ought not (out of respect) to be a Royal Academician, thus extending the links in the chain of professional

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intrigue and cabal from one side of the Continent to the other. A speech is accordingly to be made, a motion seconded, which requires time and preparation—or a sudden thought strikes the more raw and heedless adventurer, but is lost for want of words to express it—*Vox faucibus hæsit*, and the cast of the Theseus looks dull and lumpish as the disappointed candidate for popular applause surveys it by the light of his lamp in retiring to his chamber, *Sedet infelix Theseus*, &c. So the next day Gibbon is bought and studied with great avidity to give him a command of tropes and figures at their next meeting. The arrival of some new lord or squire of high degree or clerical virtuoso is announced, and a cabal immediately commences, who is to share his patronage, who is to guide his taste, who is to show him the *lions*, who is to pasquinade, epigrammatise or caricature him, and fix his pretensions to taste and liberality as culminating from the zenith or sunk below zero. Everything here is transparent and matter of instant notoriety: nothing can be done in a corner. The English are comparatively few in number, and from their being in a foreign country are objects of importance to one another as well as of curiosity to the natives. All ranks and classes are blended together for mutual attack or defence. The patron sinks into the companion; the *protégé* plays off the great man upon occasion. Indeed the grand airs and haughty reserve of English manners are a little ridiculous and out of place at Rome. You are glad to meet with any one who will bestow his compassion and ‘his tediousness’ upon you. You want some shelter from the insolence and indifference of the inhabitants, which are very much calculated to repel the feelings, and throw you back on your resources in common humanity or the partiality of your fellow-countrymen. Nor is this the least inconvenience of a stranger’s residence at Rome. You have to squabble with every one about you to prevent being cheated, to drive a hard bargain in order to live, to keep your hands and your tongue within strict bounds, for fear of being stilettoed, or thrown into the Tower of St. Angelo, or remanded home. You have much to do to avoid the contempt of the inhabitants; if you fancy you can ingratiate yourself with them and play off *the amiable*, you have a still more charming pursuit and bait for vanity and idleness. You must run the gauntlet of sarcastic words or looks for a whole street, of laughter or want of comprehension in reply to all the questions you ask; or if a pretty black-browed girl puts on a gracious aspect, and seems to interest herself in your perplexity, you think yourself in high luck, and well repaid for a thousand affronts. A smile from a Roman beauty must be well nigh fatal to many an English student at Rome. In short, while abroad, and while our self-love is continually coming into collision with that of others, and

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neither knows what to make of the other, we are necessarily thinking of ourselves and of them, and in no pleasant or profitable way. Every thing is strange and new ; we seem beginning life over again, and feel like children or rustics. We have not learned the alphabet of civilisation and humanity ; how, then, should we aspire to the height of Art ? We are taken up with ourselves as English travellers and English students, when we should be thinking of something else. All the petty intrigue, vexation, and *tracasserie* of ordinary dealings, should be banished as much as possible from the mind of the student, who requires to have his whole time and faculties to himself ; all ordinary matters should go on mechanically of themselves, without giving him a moment's uneasiness or interruption ; but here they are forced upon him with tenfold sharpness and frequency, hurting his temper and hindering his time. Instead of 'tearing from his memory all trivial, fond records,' that he may devote himself to the service of Art, and that '*her* commandment all alone may live within the book and volume of his brain, unmixed with baser matter,' he is never free from the most pitiful annoyances—they follow him into the country, sit down with him at home, meet him in the street, take him by the button, whisper in his ear, prevent his sleeping, waken him before the dawn, and plague him out of his very life, making it resemble a restless dream or an ill-written romance. Under such disadvantages, should an artist do anything, the Academy which has sent him out should lose no time in sending for him back again ; for there is nothing that may not be expected from an English student at Rome who has not become an idler, a *petit-maitre*, and a busy-body ! Or if he is still unwilling to quit classic ground, is chained by the soft fetters of the climate or of a fair face, or likes to see the morning mist rise from the Marshes of the Campagna and circle round the Dome of St. Peter's, and that to sever him from these would be to sever soul from body, let him go to Gensano, stop there for five years, visiting Rome only at intervals, wander by Albano's gleaming lake and wizard grottoes, make studies of the heads and dresses of the peasant-girls in the neighbourhood, those Goddesses of health and good-temper, embody them to the life, and show (as the result) what the world never saw before !



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### ESSAY XIV

#### THE VATICAN

*L.* THE Vatican did not quite answer your expectation ?

*H.* To say the truth, it was not such a blow as the Louvre ; but then it came after it, and what is more, at the distance of twenty years. To have made the same impression, it should have been twenty times as fine ; though that was scarcely possible, since all that there is fine in the Vatican, in Italy, or in the world, was in the Louvre when I first saw it, except the frescoes of Raphael and Michael Angelo, which could not be transported, without taking the walls of the building across the Alps.

*L.* And what, may I ask (for I am curious to hear,) did you think of these same frescoes ?

*H.* Much the same as before I saw them. As far as I could judge, they are very like the prints. I do not think the spectator's idea of them is enhanced beyond this. The Raphaels of which you have a distinct and admirable view are somewhat faded—I do not mean in colour, but the outline is injured—and the Sibyls and Prophets in the Sistine Chapel are painted on the ceiling at too great a height for the eye to distinguish the faces as accurately as one would wish. The features and expressions of the figures near the bottom of the 'Last Judgment' are sufficiently plain, and horrible enough they are.

*L.* What was your opinion of the 'Last Judgment' itself ?

*H.* It is literally too big to be seen. It is like an immense field of battle, or charnel-house, strewed with carcasses and naked bodies : or it is a shambles of Art. You have huge limbs apparently torn from their bodies and stuck against the wall : anatomical dissections, backs and diaphragms, tumbling 'with hideous ruin and combustion down,' neither intelligible groups, nor perspective, nor colour ; you distinguish the principal figure, that of Christ, only from its standing in the centre of the picture, on a sort of island of earth, separated from the rest of the subject by an inlet of sky. The whole is a scene of enormous, ghastly confusion, in which you can only make out quantity and number, and vast, uncouth masses of bones and muscles. It has the incoherence and distortion of a troubled dream, without the shadowiness ; everything is here corporeal and of solid dimensions.

*L.* But surely there must be something fine in the Sibyls and Prophets, from the copies we have of them ; justifying the high encomiums of Sir Joshua Reynolds, and of so many others ?

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H. It appears to me that nothing can be finer as to form, attitude, and outline. The whole conception is so far inimitably noble and just; and all that is felt as wanting, is a proportionable degree of expression in the countenances, though of this I am not sure, for the height (as I said before) baffles a nice scrutiny. They look to me unfinished, vague, and general. Like some fabulous figure from the antique, the heads were brutal, the bodies divine. Or at most, the faces were only continuations of and on a par with the physical form, large and bold, and with great breadth of drawing, but no more the seat of a vivifying spirit, or with a more powerful and marked intelligence emanating from them, than from the rest of the limbs, the hands, or even drapery. The filling up of the mind is, I suspect, wanting, the *divinæ particula auræ*: there is prodigious and mighty prominence and grandeur and simplicity in the features, but they are not surcharged with meaning, with thought or passion, like Raphael's, 'the rapt soul sitting in the eyes.' On the contrary, they seem only to be half-informed, and might be almost thought asleep. They are fine moulds, and contain a capacity of expression, but are not bursting, teeming with it. The outward material shrine, or tabernacle, is unexceptionable; but there is not superadded to it a revelation of the workings of the mind within. The forms in Michael Angelo are objects to admire in themselves: those of Raphael are merely a language pointing to something beyond, and full of this ultimate import.

L. But does not the difference arise from the nature of the subjects?

H. I should think not. Surely, a Sibyl in the height of her phrensy, or an inspired Prophet—'seer blest'—in the act of receiving or of announcing the will of the Almighty, is not a less fit subject for the most exalted and impassioned expression than an Apostle, a Pope, a Saint, or a common man. If you say that these persons are not represented in the act of inspired communication, but in their ordinary quiescent state,—granted; but such preternatural workings, as well as the character and frame of mind proper for them, must leave their shadowings and lofty traces behind them. The face that has once held communion with the Most High, or been wrought to madness by deep thought and passion, or that inly broods over its sacred or its magic lore, must be 'as a book where one may read strange matters,' that cannot be opened without a correspondent awe and reverence. But here is 'neither the cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night': neither the blaze of immediate inspiration nor the hallowed radiance, the mystic gloomy light that follows it, so far as I was able to perceive. I think it idle to say that Michael Angelo painted man in the abstract, and so left the expression indeterminate, when he painted prophets and other given characters in particular. He has painted

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them on a larger scale, and cast their limbs in a gigantic mould to give a dignity and command answering to their situations and high calling, but I do not see the same high character and intensity of thought or purpose impressed upon their countenances. Thus, nothing can be nobler or more characteristic than the figure of the prophet Jeremiah. It is not abstracted, but symbolical of the history and functions of the individual. The whole figure bends and droops under a weight of woe, like a large willow tree surcharged with showers. Yet there is no peculiar expression of grief in one part more than another; the head hangs down despondingly indeed, but so do the hands, the clothes, and every part seems to labour under and be involved in a complication of distress. Again, the prophet Ezra is represented reading in a striking attitude of attention, and with the book held close to him as if to lose no part of its contents in empty space:—all this is finely imagined and designed, but then the book reflects back none of its pregnant, hieroglyphic meaning on the face, which, though large and stately, is an ordinary, unimpassioned, and even *unideal* one. Daniel, again, is meant for a face of inward thought and musing, but it might seem as if the compression of the features were produced by external force as much as by involuntary perplexity. I might extend these remarks to this artist's other works; for instance, to the Moses, of which the form and attitude express the utmost dignity and energy of purpose, but the face wants a something of the intelligence and expansive views of the Hebrew legislator. It is cut from the same block, and by the same bold sweeping hand, as the sandals or the drapery.

*L.* Do you think there is any truth or value in the distinction which assigns to Raphael the dramatic, and to Michael Angelo the epic department of the art?

*H.* Very little, I confess. It is so far true, that Michael Angelo painted single figures, and Raphael chiefly groups; but Michael Angelo gave life and action to his figures, though not the same expression to the face. I think this arose from two circumstances. First, from his habits as a sculptor, in which form predominates, and in which the fixed lineaments are more attended to than the passing inflections, which are neither so easily caught nor so well given in sculpture as in painting. Secondly, it strikes me that Michael Angelo, who was a strong, iron-built man, sympathised more with the organic structure, with bones and muscles, than with the more subtle and sensitive workings of that fine medullary substance called the brain. He compounded man admirably of brass or clay, but did not succeed equally in breathing into his nostrils the breath of life, of thought or feeling. He has less humanity than Raphael, and I think

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that he is also less divine, unless it be asserted that the body is less allied to earth than the mind. Expression is, after all, the principal thing. If Michael Angelo's forms have, as I allow, an intellectual character about them and a greatness of gusto, so that you would almost say 'his bodies thought'; his faces, on the other hand, have a drossy and material one. For example, in the figure of Adam coming from the hand of his Creator, the composition, which goes on the idea of a being starting into life at the touch of Omnipotence, is sublime:—the figure of Adam, reclined at ease with manly freedom and independence, is worthy of the original founder of our race; and the expression of the face, implying passive resignation and the first consciousness of existence, is in thorough keeping—but I see nothing in the countenance of the Deity denoting supreme might and majesty. The Eve, too, lying extended at the foot of the Forbidden Tree, has an elasticity and buoyancy about it, that seems as if it could bound up from the earth of its own accord, like a bow that has been bent. It is all life and grace. The action of the head thrown back, and the upward look, correspond to the rest. The artist was here at home. In like manner, in the allegorical figures of Night and Morn at Florence, the faces are ugly or distorted, but the contour and actions of the limbs express dignity and power, in the very highest degree. The legs of the figure of Night, in particular, are twisted into the involutions of a serpent's folds; the neck is curved like the horse's, and is clothed with thunder.

*L.* What, then, is the precise difference between him and Raphael, according to your conception?

*H.* As far as I can explain the matter, it seems to me that Michael Angelo's forms are finer, but that Raphael's are more fraught with meaning; that the rigid outline and disposable masses in the first are more grand and imposing, but that Raphael puts a greater proportion of sentiment into his, and calls into play every faculty of mind and body of which his characters are susceptible, with greater subtilty and intensity of feeling. Dryden's lines—

'A fiery soul that working out its way  
Fretted the pigmy body to decay,  
And o'er-inform'd the tenement of clay'—

do not exactly answer to Raphael's character, which is mild and thoughtful rather than fiery; nor is there any want either of grace or grandeur in his figures; but the passage describes the 'o'er-informing' spirit that breathes through them, and the unequal struggle of the expression to vent itself by more than ordinary physical means. Raphael lived a much shorter time than Michael Angelo, who also

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lived long after him; and there is no comparison between the number, the variety, or the finished elegance of their works.<sup>1</sup> Michael Angelo possibly lost himself in the material and instrumental part of art, in embodying a technical theory, or in acquiring the grammar of different branches of study, excelling in knowledge and in gravity of pretension; whereas Raphael gave himself up to the diviner or lovelier impulse that breathes its soul over the face of things, being governed by a sense of reality and of general truth. There is nothing exclusive or repulsive in Raphael; he is open to all impressions alike, and seems to identify himself with whatever he saw that arrested his attention or could interest others. Michael Angelo studied for himself, and raised objects to the standards of his conception, by a *formula* or system: Raphael invented for others, and was guided only by sympathy with them. Michael Angelo was painter, sculptor, architect; but he might be said to make of each art a shrine in which to build up the stately and gigantic stature of his own mind:—Raphael was only a painter, but in that one art he seemed to pour out all the treasures and various excellence of nature, grandeur and scope of design, exquisite finishing, force, grace, delicacy, the strength of man, the softness of woman, the playfulness of infancy, thought, feeling, invention, imitation, labour, ease, and every quality that can distinguish a picture, except colour. Michael Angelo, in a word, stamped his own character on his works, or recast Nature in a mould of his own, leaving out much that was excellent: Raphael received his inspiration from without, and his genius caught the lambent flame of grace, of truth, and grandeur, which are reflected in his works with a light clear, transparent and unfading.

L. Will you mention one or two things that particularly struck you?

H. There is a figure of a man leading a horse in the Attila, which I think peculiarly characteristic. It is an ordinary face and figure, in a somewhat awkward dress: but he seems as if he had literally walked into the picture at that instant; he is looking forward with a mixture of earnestness and curiosity, as if the scene were passing before him, and every part of his figure and dress is flexible and in motion, pliant to the painter's plastic touch. This figure, so unconstrained and free, animated, salient, put me in mind, compared with the usual stiffness and shackles of the art, of chain-armour used by the knights of old instead of coat-of-mail. Raphael's fresco figures seem the least of all others taken from plaster-casts; this is

<sup>1</sup> The oil-pictures attributed to Michael Angelo are meagre and pitiful; such as that of the Fates at Florence. Another of Witches, at Cardinal Fesch's at Rome, is like what the late Mr. Barry would have admired and imitated—dingy, coarse, and vacant.

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more than can be said of Michael Angelo's, which might be taken from, or would serve for very noble ones. The horses in the same picture also delight me. Though dumb, they appear as though they could speak, and were privy to the import of the scene. Their inflated nostrils and speckled skins are like a kind of proud flesh; or they are animals spiritualised. In the Miracle of Bolsano is that group of children, round-faced, smiling, with large-orbed eyes, like infancy nestling in the arms of affection; the studied elegance of the choir of tender novices, with all their sense of the godliness of their function and the beauty of holiness; and the hard, liny, individual portraits of priests and cardinals on the right-hand, which have the same life, spirit, boldness, and marked character, as if you could have looked in upon the assembled conclave. Neither painting nor popery ever produced anything finer. There is the utmost hardness and materiality of outline, with a spirit of fire. The School of Athens is full of striking parts and ingenious contrasts; but I prefer to it the Convocation of Saints, with that noble circle of Prophets and Apostles in the sky, on whose bent foreheads and downcast eyes you see written the City of the Blest, the beatific presence of the Most High and the Glory hereafter to be revealed, a solemn brightness and a fearful dream, and that scarce less inspired circle of sages canonised here on earth, poets, heroes, and philosophers, with the painter himself, entering on one side like the recording angel, smiling in youthful beauty, and scarce conscious of the scene he has embodied. If there is a failure in any of these frescoes, it is, I think, in the Parnassus, in which there is something quaint and affected. In the St. Peter delivered from prison, he has burst with Rembrandt into the dark chambers of night, and thrown a glory round them. In the story of Cupid and Psyche, at the Little Farnese, he has, I think, even surpassed himself in a certain swelling and voluptuous grace, as if beauty grew and ripened under his touch, and the very genius of ancient fable hovered over his enamoured pencil.

*L.* I believe you when you praise, not always when you condemn. Was there anything else that you saw to give you a higher idea of him than the specimens we have in this country?

*H.* Nothing superior to the Cartoons for boldness of design and execution; but I think his best oil pictures are abroad, though I had seen most of them before in the Louvre. I had not, however, seen the Crowning of the Virgin, which is in the Picture-gallery of the Vatican, and appears to me one of his very highest-wrought pictures. The Virgin in the clouds is of an admirable sedateness and dignity, and over the throng of breathing faces below there is poured a stream of joy and fervid devotion that can be compared to nothing but the

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golden light that evening skies pour on the edges of the surging waves. 'Hope elevates, and joy brightens their every feature.' The Foligno Virgin was at Paris, in which I cannot say I am quite satisfied with the Madonna; it has rather a *precieuse* expression; but I know not enough how to admire the innumerable heads of cherubs surrounding her, touched in with such care and delicacy, yet so as scarcely to be perceptible except on close inspection, nor that figure of the winged cherub below, offering the casket, and with his round, chubby face and limbs as full of rosy health and joy, as the cup is full of the juice of the purple vine. There is another picture of his I will mention, the Leo x. in the Palace Pitti, 'on his front engraven thought and public care;' and again, that little portrait in a cap in the Louvre, muffled in thought and buried in a kind of mental *chiaroscuro*. When I think of these and so many other of his inimitable works, 'scattered like stray-gifts o'er the earth,' meeting our thoughts half-way, and yet carrying them farther than we should have been able of ourselves, enriching, refining, exalting all around, I am at a loss to find motives for equal admiration or gratitude in what Michael Angelo has left, though his Prophets and Sibyls on the walls of the Sistine Chapel are *thumping make-weights* thrown into the opposite scale. It is nearly impossible to weigh or measure their different merits. Perhaps Michael Angelo's works, in their vastness and unity, may give a greater blow to some imaginations and lift the mind more out of itself, though accompanied with less delight or food for reflection, resembling the rocky precipice, whose 'stately height though bare' overlooks the various excellence and beauty of subjected art.

L. I do not think your premises warrant your conclusion. If what you have said of each is true, I should give the undoubted preference to Raphael as at least the greater painter, if not the greater man. I must prefer the finest face to the largest mask.

H. I wish you could see and judge for yourself.

L. I prythee do not mock me. Proceed with your account. Was there nothing else worth mentioning after Raphael and Michael Angelo?

H. So much, that it has slipped from my memory. There are the finest statues in the world there, and they are scattered and put into niches or separate little rooms for effect, and not congregated together like a meeting of the marble gods of mythology, as was the case in the Louvre. There are some of Canova's, worked up to a high pitch of perfection, which might just as well have been left alone—and there are none, I think, equal to the Elgin marbles. A bath of one of the Antonines, of solid porphyry and as large as a good-sized room, struck me as the strongest proof of ancient magnificence. The

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busts are innumerable, inimitable, have a breathing clearness and transparency, revive ancient history, and are very like actual English heads and characters. The inscriptions alone on fragments of antique marble would furnish years of study to the curious or learned in that way. The vases are most elegant—of proportions and materials unrivalled in taste and in value. There are some tapestry copies of the Cartoons, very glaring and unpleasant to look at. The room containing the coloured maps of Italy, done about three hundred years ago, is one of the longest and most striking; and the passing through it, with the green hillocks, rivers, and mountains on its spotty sides, is like going a delightful and various journey. You recall or anticipate the most interesting scenes and objects. Out of the windows of these long straggling galleries, you look down into a labyrinth of inner and of outer courts, or catch the Dome of St. Peter's adjoining (like a huge shadow), or gaze at the distant amphitheatre of hills surrounding the Sacred City, which excite a pleasing awe, whether considered as the haunts of banditti or from a recollection of the wondrous scene, the hallowed spot, on which they have overlooked for ages, Imperial or Papal Rome, or her commonwealth, more august than either. Here also in one chamber of the Vatican is a room stuffed full of artists, copying the Transfiguration, or the St. Jerome of Domenichino, spitting, shrugging, and taking snuff, admiring their own performances and sneering at those of their neighbours; and on certain days of the week the whole range of the rooms is thrown open without reserve to the entire population of Rome and its environs, priests and peasants, with heads not unlike those that gleam from the walls, perfect in expression and in costume, and young peasant girls in clouted shoes with looks of pleasure, timidity and wonder, such as those with which Raphael himself, from the portraits of him, might be supposed to have hailed the dawn of heaven-born art. There is also (to mention small works with great) a portrait of George the Fourth in his robes (a present to his Holiness) turned into an outer room; and a tablet erected by him in St. Peter's, to the memory of James III. Would you believe it? Cosmo Comyn Bradwardine, when he saw the averted looks of the good people of England as they proclaimed his Majesty James III. in any of the towns through which they passed, would not have believed it. Fergus MacIvor, when in answer to the crier of the court, who repeated 'Long live King George!' he retorted, 'Long live King James!' would not have believed it possible!

*L.* Hang your politics.

*H.* Never mind, if they do not hang me.



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### ESSAY XV

#### MERRY ENGLAND

‘St. George for merry England!’

THIS old-fashioned epithet might be supposed to have been bestowed ironically, or on the old principle—*Ut lucus a non lucendo*. Yet there is something in the sound that hits the fancy, and a sort of truth beyond appearances. To be sure, it is from a dull, homely ground that the gleams of mirth and jollity break out; but the streaks of light that tinge the evening sky are not the less striking on that account. The beams of the morning-sun shining on the lonely glades, or through the idle branches of the tangled forest, the leisure, the freedom, ‘the pleasure of going and coming without knowing where,’ the troops of wild deer, the sports of the chase, and other rustic gambols, were sufficient to justify the well-known appellation of ‘Merry Sherwood,’ and in like manner, we may apply the phrase to *Merry England*. The smile is not the less sincere because it does not always play upon the cheek; and the jest is not the less welcome, nor the laugh less hearty, because they happen to be a relief from care or leaden-eyed melancholy. The instances are the more precious as they are rare; and we look forward to them with the greater good will, or back upon them with the greater gratitude, as we drain the last drop in the cup with particular relish. If not always gay or in good spirits, we are glad when any occasion draws us out of our natural gloom, and disposed to make the most of it. We may say with Silence in the play, ‘I have been merry once ere now,’—and this once was to serve him all his life; for he was a person of wonderful silence and gravity, though ‘he chirped over his cups,’ and announced with characteristic glee that ‘there were pippins and cheese to come.’ Silence was in this sense a merry man, that is, he would be merry if he could, and a very great economy of wit, like very slender fare, was a banquet to him, from the simplicity of his taste and habits. ‘Continents,’ says Hobbes, ‘have most of what they contain’—and in this view it may be contended that the English are the merriest people in the world, since they only show it on high-days and holidays. They are then like a school-boy let loose from school, or like a dog that has slipped his collar. They are not gay like the French, who are one eternal smile of self-complacency, tortured into affectation, or spun into languid indifference, nor are they voluptuous and immersed in sensual indolence, like the Italians; but they have that sort of intermittent,

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fitful, irregular gaiety, which is neither worn out by habit, nor deadened by passion, but is sought with avidity as it takes the mind by surprise, is startled by a sense of oddity and incongruity, indulges its wayward humours or lively impulses, with perfect freedom and lightness of heart, and seizes occasion by the forelock, that it may return to serious business with more cheerfulness, and have something to beguile the hours of thought or sadness. I do not see how there can be high spirits without low ones; and every thing has its price according to circumstances. Perhaps we have to pay a heavier tax on pleasure, than some others: what skills it, so long as our good spirits and good hearts enable us to bear it?

'They' (the English), says Froissart, 'amused themselves sadly after the fashion of their country'—*ils se rejoissoient tristement selon la coutume de leur pays*. They have indeed a way of their own. Their mirth is a relaxation from gravity, a challenge to dull care to be gone; and one is not always clear at first, whether the appeal is successful. The cloud may still hang on the brow; the ice may not thaw at once. To help them out in their new character is an act of charity. Any thing short of hanging or drowning is something to begin with. They do not enter into their amusements the less doggedly because they may plague others. They like a thing the better for hitting them a rap on the knuckles, for making their blood tingle. They do not dance or sing, but they make good cheer—'eat, drink, and are merry.' No people are fonder of field-sports, Christmas gambols, or practical jests. Blindman's-buff, hunt-the-slipper, hot-cockles, and snap-dragon, are all approved English games, full of laughable surprises and 'hair-breadth 'scapes,' and serve to amuse the winter fire-side after the roast-beef and plum-pudding, the spiced ale and roasted crab, thrown (hissing-hot) into the foaming tankard. Punch (not the liquor, but the puppet) is not, I fear, of English origin; but there is no place, I take it, where he finds himself more at home or meets a more joyous welcome, where he collects greater crowds at the corners of streets, where he opens the eyes or distends the cheeks wider, or where the bangs and blows, the uncouth gestures, ridiculous anger and screaming voice of the chief performer excite more boundless merriment or louder bursts of laughter among all ranks and sorts of people. An English theatre is the very throne of pantomime; nor do I believe that the gallery and boxes of Drury-lane or Covent-garden filled on the proper occasions with holiday folks (big or little) yield the palm for undisguised, tumultuous, inextinguishable laughter to any spot in Europe. I do not speak of the refinement of the mirth (this is no fastidious speculation) but of its cordiality, on the return of these long looked-for and licensed periods; and I may

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add here, by way of illustration, that the English common people are a sort of grown children, spoiled and sulky perhaps, but full of glee and merriment, when their attention is drawn off by some sudden and striking object. The May-pole is almost gone out of fashion among us : but May-day, besides its flowering hawthorns and its pearly dews, has still its boasted exhibition of painted chimney-sweepers and their Jack-o'-the-Green, whose tawdry finery, bedizened faces, unwonted gestures, and short-lived pleasures call forth good-humoured smiles and looks of sympathy in the spectators. There is no place where trap-ball, fives, prison-base, foot-ball, quoits, bowls are better understood or more successfully practised ; and the very names of a cricket bat and ball make English fingers tingle. What happy days must 'Long Robinson' have passed in getting ready his wickets and mending his bats, who when two of the fingers of his right-hand were struck off by the violence of a ball, had a screw fastened to it to hold the bat, and with the other hand still sent the ball thundering against the boards that bounded *Old Lord's cricket-ground* ! What delightful hours must have been his in looking forward to the matches that were to come, in recounting the feats he had performed in those that were past ! I have myself whiled away whole mornings in seeing him strike the ball (like a countryman mowing with a scythe) to the farthest extremity of the smooth, level, sun-burnt ground, and with long, awkward strides count the notches that made victory sure ! Then again, cudgel-playing, quarter-staff, bull and badger-baiting, cock-fighting are almost the peculiar diversions of this island, and often objected to us as barbarous and cruel ; horse-racing is the delight and the ruin of numbers ; and the noble science of boxing is all our own. Foreigners can scarcely understand how we can squeeze pleasure out of this pastime ; the luxury of hard blows given or received ; the joy of the ring ; nor the perseverance of the combatants.<sup>1</sup> The English

<sup>1</sup> 'The gentle and free Passage of arms at Ashby' was, we are told, so called by the Chroniclers of the time, on account of the feats of horsemanship and the quantity of knightly blood that was shed. This last circumstance was perhaps necessary to qualify it with the epithet of 'gentle,' in the opinion of some of these historians. I think the reason why the English are the bravest nation on earth is, that the thought of blood or a delight in cruelty is not the chief excitement with them. Where it is, there is necessarily a *reaction* ; for though it may add to our eagerness and savage ferocity in inflicting wounds, it does not enable us to endure them with greater patience. The English are led to the attack or sustain it equally well, because they fight as they box, not out of malice, but to show *pluck* and manhood. *Fair play and old England for ever* ! This is the only bravery that will stand the test. There is the same determination and spirit shown in resistance as in attack ; but not the same pleasure in getting a cut with a sabre as in giving one. There is, therefore, always a certain degree of effeminacy mixed up with any approach to cruelty, since both have their source in the same principle, *viz.* an over-valuing of pain.<sup>(a)</sup> This was the reason the French (having the best cause

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also excel, or are not excelled in wiring a hare, in stalking a deer, in shooting, fishing, and hunting. England to this day boasts her Robin Hood and his merry men, that stout archer and outlaw, and patron-saint of the sporting-calendar. What a cheerful sound is that of the hunters, issuing from the autumnal wood and sweeping over hill and dale !

—‘ A cry more tuneable  
Was never halloo’d to by hound or horn.’

What sparkling richness in the scarlet coats of the riders, what a glittering confusion in the pack, what spirit in the horses, what eagerness in the followers on foot, as they disperse over the plain, or force their way over hedge and ditch ! Surely, the coloured prints and pictures of these, hung up in gentlemen’s halls and village alehouses, however humble as works of art, have more life and health and spirit in them, and mark the pith and nerve of the national character more creditably than the mawkish, sentimental, affected designs of Theseus and Pirithous, and Æneas and Dido, pasted on foreign *salons à manger*, and the interior of country-houses. If our tastes are not epic, nor our pretensions lofty, they are simple and our own ; and we may possibly enjoy our native rural sports, and the rude remembrances of them, with the truer relish on this account, that they are suited to us and we to them. The English nation, too, are naturally ‘ brothers of the angle.’ This pursuit implies just that mixture of patience and pastime, of vacancy and thoughtfulness, of idleness and business, of pleasure and of pain, which is suited to the genius of an Englishman, and as I suspect, of no one else in the same degree. He is eminently gifted to stand in the situation assigned by Dr. Johnson to the angler, ‘ at one end of a rod with a worm at the other.’ I should suppose no language can show such a book as an often-mentioned one, Walton’s *Complete Angler*,—so full of *naïveté*, of unaffected sprightliness, of busy trifling, of dainty songs, of refreshing brooks, of shady arbours, of happy thoughts and of the herb called *Heart’s Ease* ! Some persons can see neither the wit nor wisdom of this genuine volume, as if a book as well as a man might not have a personal character belonging to it, amiable, venerable from the spirit of joy and thorough goodness it manifests, independently of acute remarks or

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and the best general in the world) ran away at Waterloo, because they were inflamed, furious, drunk with the blood of their enemies, but when it came to their turn, wanting the same stimulus, they were panic-struck, and their hearts and their senses failed them all at once.

(<sup>6</sup>) Vanity is the same half-witted principle, compared with pride. It leaves men in the lurch when it is most needed ; is mortified at being reduced to stand on the defensive, and relinquishes the field to its more surly antagonist.

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scientific discoveries : others object to the cruelty of Walton's theory and practice of trout-fishing—for my part, I should as soon charge an infant with cruelty for killing a fly, and I feel the same sort of pleasure in reading his book as I should have done in the company of this happy, child-like old man, watching his ruddy cheek, his laughing eye, the kindness of his heart, and the dexterity of his hand in seizing his finny prey ! It must be confessed, there is often an odd sort of *materiality* in English sports and recreations. I have known several persons, whose existence consisted wholly in manual exercises, and all whose enjoyments lay at their finger-ends. Their greatest happiness was in cutting a stick, in mending a cabbage-net, in digging a hole in the ground, in hitting a mark, turning a lathe, or in something else of the same kind, at which they had a certain *knack*. Well is it when we can amuse ourselves with such trifles and without injury to others ! This class of character, which the Spectator has immortalised in the person of Will Wimble, is still common among younger brothers and gentlemen of retired incomes in town or country. The *Cockney* character is of our English growth, as this intimates a feverish fidgety delight in rural sights and sounds, and a longing wish, after the turmoil and confinement of a city-life, to transport one's-self to the freedom and breathing sweetness of a country retreat. London is half suburbs. The suburbs of Paris are a desert ; and you see nothing but crazy wind-mills, stone-walls, and a few straggling visitants in spots where in England you would find a thousand villas, a thousand terraces crowned with their own delights, or be stunned with the noise of bowling-greens and tea-gardens, or stifled with the fumes of tobacco mingling with fragrant shrubs, or the clouds of dust raised by half the population of the metropolis panting and toiling in search of a mouthful of fresh air. The Parisian is, perhaps, as well (or better) contented with himself wherever he is, stewed in his shop or his garret ; the Londoner is miserable in these circumstances, and glad to escape from them.<sup>1</sup> Let no one object to the gloomy appearance of a London Sunday, compared with a Parisian one. It is a part of our politics and our religion : we would not have James the First's ' Book of Sports ' thrust down our throats : and besides, it is a part of our character to do one thing at a time, and not to be dancing a jig and on our knees in the same breath. It is true the Englishman spends his Sunday evening at the ale-house—

—' And e'en on Sunday  
Drank with Kirton Jean till Monday '—

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<sup>1</sup> The English are fond of change of scene ; the French of change of posture ; the Italians like to sit still and do nothing.

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but he only unbends and waxes mellow by degrees, and sits soaking till he can neither sit, stand, nor go : it is his vice, and a beastly one it is, but not a proof of any inherent distaste to mirth or good-fellowship. Neither can foreigners throw the carnival in our teeth with any effect : those who have seen it (at Florence, for example) will say that it is duller than any thing in England. Our Bartholomew-Fair is Queen Mab herself to it ! What can be duller than a parcel of masks moving about the streets and looking as grave and monotonous as possible from day to day, and with the same lifeless formality in their limbs and gestures as in their features ? One might as well expect variety and spirit in a procession of waxwork. We must be hard run indeed, when we have recourse to a pasteboard proxy to set off our mirth : a mask may be a very good cover for licentiousness (though of that I saw no signs), but it is a very bad exponent of wit and humour. I should suppose there is more drollery and unction in the caricatures in Gilray's shop-window, than in all the masks in Italy, without exception.<sup>1</sup>

The humour of English writing and description has often been wondered at ; and it flows from the same source as the merry *traits* of our character. A degree of barbarism and rusticity seems necessary to the perfection of humour. The droll and laughable depend on peculiarity and incongruity of character. But with the progress of refinement, the peculiarities of individuals and of classes wear out or lose their sharp, abrupt edges ; nay, a certain slowness and dulness of understanding is required to be struck with odd and unaccountable appearances, for which a greater facility of apprehension can sooner assign an explanation that breaks the force of the seeming absurdity, and to which a wider scope of imagination is more easily reconciled. Clowns and country people are more amused, are more disposed to laugh and make sport of the dress of strangers, because from their ignorance the surprise is greater, and they cannot conceive any thing to be natural or proper to which they are unused. Without a given portion of hardness and repulsiveness of feeling the ludicrous cannot well exist. Wonder, and curiosity, the attributes of inexperience, enter greatly into its composition. Now it appears to me that the English are (or were) just at that mean point between intelligence and obtuseness, which must produce the most abundant and happiest crop of humour. Absurdity and singularity glide over

<sup>1</sup> Bells are peculiar to England. They jingle them in Italy during the carnival as boys do with us at Shrovetide ; but they have no notion of ringing them. The sound of village bells never cheers you in travelling, nor have you the lute or cittern in their stead. The expression of 'Merry Bells' is a favourite and not one of the least appropriate in our language.

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the French mind without jarring or jostling with it ; or they evaporate in levity :—with the Italians they are lost in indolence or pleasure. The ludicrous takes hold of the English imagination, and clings to it with all its ramifications. We resent any difference or peculiarity of appearance at first, and yet, having not much malice at our hearts, we are glad to turn it into a jest—we are liable to be offended, and as willing to be pleased—struck with oddity from not knowing what to make of it, we wonder and burst out a laughing at the eccentricity of others, while we follow our own bent from wilfulness or simplicity, and thus afford them, in our turn, matter for the indulgence of the comic vein. It is possible that a greater refinement of manners may give birth to finer distinctions of satire and a nicer tact for the ridiculous : but our insular situation and character are, I should say, most likely to foster, as they have in fact fostered, the greatest quantity of natural and striking humour, in spite of our plodding tenaciousness, and want both of gaiety and quickness of perception. A set of raw recruits with their awkward movements and unbending joints are laughable enough : but they cease to be so, when they have once been drilled into discipline and uniformity. So it is with nations that lose their angular points and grotesque qualities with education and intercourse : but it is in a mixed state of manners that comic humour chiefly flourishes, for, in order that the drollery may not be lost, we must have spectators of the passing scene who are able to appreciate and embody its most remarkable features,—wits as well as *butts* for ridicule. I shall mention two names in this department, which may serve to redeem the national character from absolute dulness and solemn pretence,—Fielding and Hogarth. These were thorough specimens of true English humour ; yet both were grave men. In reality, too high a pitch of animal spirits runs away with the imagination, instead of helping it to reach the goal ; is inclined to take the jest for granted when it ought to work it out with patient and marked touches, and it ends in vapid flippancy and impertinence. Among our neighbours on the Continent, Molière and Rabelais carried the freedom of wit and humour to an almost incredible height ; but they rather belonged to the old French school, and even approach and exceed the English licence and extravagance of conception. I do not consider Congreve's wit (though it belongs to us) as coming under the article here spoken of ; for his genius is any thing but *merry*. Lord Byron was in the habit of railing at the spirit of our good old comedy, and of abusing Shakespear's Clowns and Fools, which he said the refinement of the French and Italian stage would not endure, and which only our grossness and puerile taste could tolerate. In this I agree with him ;

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and it is *pat* to my purpose. I flatter myself that we are almost the only people left who understand and relish *nonsense*. We are not 'merry and wise,' but indulge our mirth to excess and folly. When we trifle, we trifle in good earnest; and having once relaxed our hold of the helm, drift idly down the stream, and delighted with the change are tossed about 'by every little breath' of whim or caprice,

'That under Heaven is blown.'

All we then want is to proclaim a truce with reason, and to be pleased with as little expense of thought or pretension to wisdom as possible. This licensed fooling is carried to its very utmost length in Shakespear, and in some other of our elder dramatists, without, perhaps, sufficient warrant or the same excuse. Nothing can justify this extreme relaxation but extreme tension. Shakespear's trifling does indeed tread upon the very borders of vacancy: his meaning often hangs by the very slenderest threads. For this he might be blamed if it did not take away our breath to follow his eagle flights, or if he did not at other times make the cordage of our hearts crack. After our heads ache with thinking, it is fair to play the fool. The clowns were as proper an appendage to the gravity of our antique literature, as fools and dwarfs were to the stately dignity of courts and noble houses in former days. Of all people, they have the best right to claim a total exemption from rules and rigid formality, who, when they have any thing of importance to do, set about it with the greatest earnestness and perseverance, and are generally grave and sober to a proverb.<sup>1</sup> Poor Swift, who wrote more idle or *nonsense* verses than any man, was the severest of moralists; and his feelings and observations morbidly acute. Did not Lord Byron himself follow up his Childe Harold with his Don Juan?—not that I insist on what he did as an illustration of the English character. He was one of the English Nobility, not one of the English People; and his occasional ease and familiarity were in my mind equally constrained and affected, whether in relation to the pretensions of his rank or the efforts of his genius.

They ask you in France, how you pass your time in England without amusements; and can with difficulty believe that there are theatres in London, still less that they are larger and handsomer than those in Paris. That we should have comic actors, 'they own, surprises them.' They judge of the English character in the lump as one great jolter-head, containing all the stupidity of the country,

<sup>1</sup> The strict formality of French serious writing is resorted to as a foil to the natural levity of their character.



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as the large ball at the top of the Dispensary in Warwick-lane, from its resemblance to a gilded pill, has been made to represent the whole pharmacopœia and professional quackery of the kingdom. They have no more notion, for instance, how we should have such an actor as Liston on our stage, than if we were to tell them we have parts performed by a sea-otter; nor if they were to see him, would they be much the wiser, or know what to think of his unaccountable twitches of countenance or non-descript gestures, of his teeth chattering in his head, his eyes that seem dropping from their sockets, his nose that is tickled by a jest as by a feather and shining with self-complacency as if oiled, his ignorant conceit, his gaping stupor, his lumpish vivacity in Lubin Log or Tony Lumpkin; for as our rivals do not wind up the machine to such a determined intensity of purpose, neither have they any idea of its running down to such degrees of imbecility and folly, or coming to an absolute *stand-still* and lack of meaning, nor can they enter into or be amused with the contrast. No people ever laugh heartily who can give a reason for their doing so: and I believe the English in general are not yet in this predicament. They are not metaphysical, but very much in a state of nature; and this is one main ground why I give them credit for being merry, notwithstanding appearances. Their mirth is not the mirth of vice or desperation, but of innocence and a native wildness. They do not cavil or boggle at niceties, and not merely come to the edge of a joke, but break their necks over it with a wanton 'Here goes,' where others make a *pirouette* and stand upon decorum. The French cannot, however, be persuaded of the excellence of our comic stage, nor of the store we set by it. When they ask what amusements we have, it is plain they can never have heard of Mrs. Jordan, nor King, nor Bannister, nor Suett, nor Munden, nor Lewis, nor little Simmons, nor Dodd, and Parsons, and Emery, and Miss Pope, and Miss Farren, and all those who even in my time have gladdened a nation and 'made life's business like a summer's dream.' Can I think of them, and of their names that glittered in the play-bills when I was young, exciting all the flutter of hope and expectation of seeing them in their favourite parts of Nell, or Little Pickle, or Touchstone, or Sir Peter Teazle, or Lenitive in the Prize, or Lingo, or Crabtree, or Nipperkin, or old Dornton, or Ranger, or the Copper Captain, or Lord Sands, or Filch, or Moses, or Sir Andrew Aguecheek, or Acres, or Elbow, or Hodge, or Flora, or the Duenna, or Lady Teazle, or Lady Grace, or of the gaiety that sparkled in all eyes, and the delight that overflowed all hearts, as they glanced before us in these parts,

'Throwing a gaudy shadow upon life,'—

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and not feel my heart yearn within me, or couple the thoughts of England and the spleen together? Our cloud has at least its rainbow tints; ours is not one long polar night of cold and dulness, but we have the gleaming lights of fancy to amuse us, the household fires of truth and genius to warm us. We can go to a play and see Liston; or stay at home and read Roderick Random; or have Hogarth's prints of *Marriage à la Mode* hanging round our room. 'Tut! there's livers even in England,' as well as 'out of it.' We are not quite the *forlorn hope* of humanity, the last of nations. The French look at us across the Channel, and seeing nothing but water and a cloudy mist, think that this is England.

——'What's our Britain  
In the world's volume? In a great pool a swan's nest.'

If they have any farther idea of us, it is of George III. and our Jack tars, the House of Lords and House of Commons, and this is no great addition to us. To go beyond this, to talk of arts and elegances as having taken up their abode here, or to say that Mrs. Abington was equal to Mademoiselle Mars, and that we at one time got up the 'School for Scandal,' as they do the 'Misanthrope,' is to persuade them that Iceland is a pleasant summer-retreat, or to recommend the whale-fishery as a classical amusement. The French are the *cockneys* of Europe, and have no idea how any one can exist out of Paris, or be alive without incessant grimace and *jabber*. Yet what imports it? What! though the joyous train I have just enumerated were, perhaps, never heard of in the precincts of the Palais-Royal, is it not enough that they gave pleasure where they were, to those who saw and heard them? Must our laugh, to be sincere, have its echo on the other side of the water? Had not the French their favourites and their enjoyments at the time, that we knew nothing of? Why then should we not have ours (and boast of them too) without their leave? A monopoly of self-conceit is not a monopoly of all other advantages. The English, when they go abroad, do not take away the prejudice against them by their looks. We seem duller and sadder than we are. As I write this, I am sitting in the open air in a beautiful valley, near Vevey: Clarens is on my left, the Dent de Jamant is behind me, the rocks of Meillerie opposite: under my feet is a green bank, enamelled with white and purple flowers, in which a dew-drop here and there still glitters with pearly light—

'And gaudy butterflies flutter around.'

Intent upon the scene and upon the thoughts that stir within me, I conjure up the cheerful passages of my life, and a crowd of happy

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images appear before me. No one would see it in my looks—my eyes grow dull and fixed, and I seem rooted to the spot, as all this phantasmagoria passes in review before me, glancing a reflex lustre on the face of the world and nature. But the traces of pleasure, in my case, sink into an absorbent ground of thoughtful melancholy, and require to be brought out by time and circumstances, or (as the critics tell you) by the *varnish* of style!

The *comfort*, on which the English lay so much stress, is of the same character, and arises from the same source as their mirth. Both exist by contrast and a sort of contradiction. The English are certainly the most uncomfortable of all people in themselves, and therefore it is that they stand in need of every kind of comfort and accommodation. The least thing puts them out of their way, and therefore every thing must be in its place. They are mightily offended at disagreeable tastes and smells, and therefore they exact the utmost neatness and nicety. They are sensible of heat and cold, and therefore they cannot exist, unless every thing is snug and warm, or else open and airy, where they are. They must have 'all appliances and means to boot.' They are afraid of interruption and intrusion, and therefore they shut themselves up in in-door enjoyments and by their own firesides. It is not that they require luxuries (for that implies a high degree of epicurean indulgence and gratification), but they cannot do without *their comforts*; that is, whatever tends to supply their physical wants, and ward off physical pain and annoyance. As they have not a fund of animal spirits and enjoyments in themselves, they cling to external objects for support, and derive solid satisfaction from the ideas of order, cleanliness, plenty, property, and domestic quiet, as they seek for diversion from odd accidents and grotesque surprises, and have the highest possible relish not of voluptuous softness, but of hard knocks and dry blows, as one means of ascertaining their personal identity.

### ESSAY XVI

#### ON THE CONVERSATION OF LORDS

'An infinite deal of nothing.'—SHAKESPEAR.

THE conversation of Lords is very different from that of authors Mounted on horseback, they stick at nothing in the chace, and clear every obstacle with flying leaps, while we poor devils have no chance of keeping up with them with our clouten shoes and long hunting-

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poles. They have all the benefit of education, society, confidence, they read books, purchase pictures, breed horses, learn to ride, dance, and fence, look after their estates, travel abroad :—authors have none of these advantages, or inlets of knowledge, to assist them, except one, reading ; and this is still more impoverished and clouded by the painful exercise of their own thoughts. The knowledge of the Great has a character of wealth and property in it, like the stores of the rich merchant or manufacturer, who lays his hands on all within his reach : the understanding of the student is like the workshop of the mechanic, who has nothing but what he himself creates. How difficult is the production, how small the display in the one case compared to the other ! Most of Correggio's designs are contained in one small room at Parma : how different from the extent and variety of some hereditary and princely collections !

The human mind has a trick (probably a very natural and consoling one) of striking a balance between the favours of wisdom and of fortune, and of making one thing a gratuitous and convenient foil to another. Whether this is owing to envy or to a love of justice, I will not say : but whichever it is owing to, I must own I do not think it well founded. A scholar is without money : therefore (to make the odds even) we argue (not very wisely) that a rich man must be without ideas. This does not follow. 'The wish is father to that thought ;' and the thought is a spurious one. We might as well pretend, that because a man has the advantage of us in height, he is not strong or in good health ; or because a woman is handsome, she is not at the same time young, accomplished and well-bred. Our fastidious self-love or our rustic prejudices may revolt at the accumulation of advantages in others ; but we must learn to submit to the mortifying truth, which every day's experience points out, with what grace we may. There were those who grudged to Lord Byron the name of a poet because he was of noble birth ; as he himself could not endure the praises bestowed upon Wordsworth, whom he considered as a clown. He carried this weakness so far, that he even seemed to regard it as a piece of presumption in Shakespear *to be preferred before him* as a dramatic author, and contended that Milton's writing an epic poem and the 'Answer to Salmasius' was entirely owing to vanity—so little did he relish the superiority of the old blind school-master. So it is that one party would arrogate every advantage to themselves, while those on the other side would detract from all in their rivals that they do not themselves possess. Some will not have the statue painted : others can see no beauty in the clay-model !

The man of rank and fortune, besides his chance for the common

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or (now and then) an uncommon share of wit and understanding, has it in his power to avail himself of every thing that is to be taught of art and science; he has tutors and valets at his beck; he may master the dead languages, he *must* acquire the modern ones; he moves in the highest circles, and may descend to the lowest; the paths of pleasure, of ambition, of knowledge, are open to him; he may devote himself to a particular study, or skim the cream of all; he may read books or men or things, as he finds most convenient or agreeable; he is not forced to confine his attention to some one dry uninteresting pursuit; he has a single *hobby*, or half a dozen; he is not distracted by care, by poverty and want of leisure; he has every opportunity and facility afforded him for acquiring various accomplishments of body or mind, and every encouragement, from confidence and success, for making an imposing display of them; he may laugh with the gay, jest with the witty, argue with the wise; he has been in courts, in colleges, and camps, is familiar with playhouses and taverns, with the riding-house and the dissecting-room, has been present at or taken part in the debates of both Houses of Parliament, was in the O. P. row, and is deep in the Fancy, understands the broadsword exercise, is a connoisseur in regimentals, plays the whole game at whist, is a tolerable proficient at backgammon, drives four in hand, skates, rows, swims, shoots; knows the different sorts of game and modes of agriculture in the different counties of England, the manufactures and commerce of the different towns, the politics of Europe, the campaigns in Spain, has the Gazette, the newspapers, and reviews at his fingers' ends, has visited the finest scenes of Nature and beheld the choicest works of Art, and is in society where he is continually hearing or talking of all these things; and yet we are surprised to find that a person so circumstanced and qualified has any ideas to communicate or words to express himself, and is not, as by patent and prescription he was bound to be, a mere well dressed fop of fashion or a booby lord! It would be less remarkable if a poor author, who has none of this giddy range and scope of information, who pores over the page till it fades from his sight, and refines upon his style till the words stick in his throat, should be dull as a beetle and mute as a fish, instead of spontaneously pouring out a volume of wit and wisdom on every subject that can be started.

An author lives out of the world, or mixes chiefly with those of his own class; which renders him pedantic and pragmatical, or gives him a reserved, hesitating, and *interdicted* manner. A lord or gentleman-commoner goes into the world, and this imparts that fluency, spirit, and freshness to his conversation, which arises from the circulation of ideas and from the greater animation and excitement of

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unrestrained intercourse. An author's tongue is tied for want of somebody to speak to : his ideas rust and become obscured, from not being brought out in company and exposed to the gaze of instant admiration. A lord has always some one at hand on whom he can 'bestow his tediousness,' and grows voluble, copious, inexhaustible in consequence ; his wit is polished, and the flowers of his oratory expanded by his smiling commerce with the world, like the figures in tapestry, that after being thrust into a corner and folded up in closets, are displayed on festival and gala-days. Again, the man of fashion and fortune reduces many of those arts and mysteries to practice, of which the scholar gains all his knowledge from books and vague description. Will not the rules of architecture find a readier reception and sink deeper into the mind of the proprietor of a noble mansion, or of him who means to build one, than of the half-starved occupier of a garret ? Will not the political economist's insight into Mr. Ricardo's doctrine of Rent, or Mr. Malthus's theory of Population, be vastly quickened by the circumstance of his possessing a large landed estate and having to pay enormous poor-rates ? And in general is it not self-evident that a man's knowledge of the true interests of the country will be enlarged just in proportion to the *stake* he has in it ? A person may have read accounts of different cities and the customs of different nations : but will this give him the same accurate idea of the situation of celebrated places, of the aspect and manners of the inhabitants, or the same lively impulse and ardour and fund of striking particulars in expatiating upon them, as if he had run over half the countries of Europe, for no other purpose than to satisfy his own curiosity, and excite that of others on his return ? I many years ago looked into the Duke of Newcastle's 'Treatise on Horsemanship' ; all I remember of it is some quaint cuts of the Duke and his riding-master introduced to illustrate the lessons. Had I myself possessed a stud of Arabian coursers, with grooms and a master of the horse to assist me in reducing these precepts to practice, they would have made a stronger impression on my mind ; and what interested myself from vanity or habit, I could have made interesting to others. I am sure I could have learnt to *ride the Great Horse*, and do twenty other things, in the time I have employed in endeavouring to make something out of nothing, or in conning the same problem fifty times over, as monks count over their beads ! I have occasionally in my life bought a few prints, and hung them up in my room with great satisfaction ; but is it to be supposed possible, from this casual circumstance, that I should compete in taste or in the knowledge of *virtù* with a peer of the realm, who has in his possession the costly designs, or a wealthy

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commoner, who has spent half his fortune in learning to distinguish copies from originals? 'A question not to be asked!' Nor is it likely that the having dipped into the Memoirs of Count Grammont, or of Lady Vane in Peregrine Pickle, should enable any one to sustain a conversation on subjects of love and gallantry with the same ease, grace, brilliancy, and spirit as the having been engaged in a hundred adventures of one's own, or heard the scandal and tittle-tattle of fashionable life for the last thirty years canvassed a hundred times. Books may be manufactured from other books by some dull, mechanical process: it is conversation and the access to the best society that alone fit us for society; or 'the act and practic part of life must be the mistress to our theorique,' before we can hope to shine in mixed company, or bend our previous knowledge to ordinary and familiar uses out of that plaster-cast mould which is as brittle as it is formal!

There is another thing which tends to produce the same effect, *viz.* that lords and gentlemen seldom trouble themselves about the knotty and uninviting parts of a subject: they leave it to 'the dregs of earth' to drain the cup or find the bottom. They are attracted by the frothy and sparkling. If a question puzzles them, or is not likely to amuse others, they leave it to its fate, or to those whose business it is to contend with difficulty, and to pursue truth for its own sake. They string together as many available, *off-hand* topics as they can procure for love or money; and aided by a good person or address, sport them with very considerable effect at the next rout or party they go to. They do not *bore* you with pedantry, or tease you with sophistry. Their conversation is not made up of *moot-points* or *choke-pears*. They do not willingly forego 'the feast of reason or the flow of soul' to grub up some solitary truth or dig for hid treasure. They are amateurs, not professors; the patrons, not the drudges of knowledge. An author loses half his life, and *stultifies* his faculties, in hopes to find out something which perhaps neither he nor any one else can ever find out. For this he neglects half a hundred acquirements, half a hundred accomplishments. *Aut Cæsar aut nihil*. He is proud of the discovery or of the fond pursuit of one truth—a lord is vain of a thousand ostentatious common-places. If the latter ever devotes himself to some crabbed study, or sets about finding out the longitude, he is then to be looked upon as a humorist if he fails—a genius if he succeeds—and no longer belongs to the class I have been speaking of.

Perhaps a multiplicity of attainments and pursuits is not very favourable to their selectness; as a local and personal acquaintance with objects of imagination takes away from, instead of adding to,

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their romantic interest. Familiarity is said to breed contempt; or at any rate, the being brought into contact with places, persons, or things that we have hitherto only heard or read of, removes a certain aerial delicious veil of refinement from them, and strikes at that *ideal* abstraction, which is the charm and boast of a life conversant chiefly among books. The huddling a number of tastes and studies together tends to degrade and vulgarise each, and to give a crude, unconcocted, dissipated turn to the mind. Instead of stuffing it full of gross, palpable, immediate objects of excitement, a wiser plan would be to leave something in reserve, something hovering in airy space to draw our attention out of ourselves, to excite hope, curiosity, wonder, and never to satisfy it. The great art is not to throw a glare of light upon all objects, or to lay the whole extended landscape bare at one view; but so to manage as to see the more amiable side of things, and through the narrow vistas and loop-holes of retreat,

‘Catch glimpses that may make us less forlorn.’

I hate to annihilate air and distance by the perpetual use of an opera-glass, to run every thing into foreground, and to interpose no medium between the thought and the object. The breath of words stirs and plays idly with the gossamer web of fancy: the touch of things destroys it. I have seen a good deal of authors: and I believe that they (as well as I) would quite as lieve that I had not. Places I have seen too, that did not answer my expectation. Pictures (that is, some few of them) are the only things that are the better for our having studied them ‘face to face, not in a glass darkly,’ and that in themselves surpass any description we can give, or any notion we can form of them. But I do not think seriously, after all, that those who possess are the best judges of them. They become furniture, property in their hands. The purchasers look to the price they will fetch, or turn to that which they have cost. They consider not beauty or expression, but the workmanship, the date, the pedigree, the school—something that will figure in the description in a catalogue or in a puff in a newspaper. They are blinded by silly admiration of whatever belongs to themselves, and warped so as to eye ‘with jealous leer malign’ all that is not theirs. Taste is melted down in the crucible of avarice and vanity, and leaves a wretched *caput mortuum* of pedantry and conceit. As to books, they ‘best can feel them who have read them most,’ and who rely on them for their only support and their only chance of distinction. They most keenly relish the graces of style who have in vain tried to make them their own: they alone understand the value of a thought who have gone through the trouble of thinking. The privation of other advantages is not a clear



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loss, if it is counterbalanced by a proportionable concentration and unity of interest in what is left. The love of letters is the forlorn hope of the man of letters. His ruling passion is the love of fame. A member of the Roxburgh Club has a certain work (let it be the *Decameron* of Boccaccio) splendidly bound, and in the old quarto edition, we will say. In this not only his literary taste is gratified, but the pride of property, the love of external elegance and decoration. The poor student has only a paltry and somewhat worn copy of the same work (or perhaps only a translation) which he picked up at a stall, standing out of a shower of rain. What then! has not the Noble Virtuoso doubly the advantage, and a much higher pleasure in the perusal of the work? No; for these are vulgar and mechanical helps to the true enjoyment of letters. From all this mock-display and idle parade of binding and arms and dates, his unthought-of rival is precluded, and sees only the talismanic words, feels only the spirit of the author, and in that author reads 'with sparkling eyes,'

'His title to a mansion in the skies.'

Oh! divine air of learning, fanned by the undying breath of genius, still let me taste thee, free from all adventitious admixtures,

'Pure in the last recesses of the soul!'

We are far at present from the style of Swift's 'Polite Conversation.' The fashionable tone has quite changed in this respect, and almost gone into the opposite extreme. At that period, the polite world seems to have been nearly at a stand, in a state of intellectual *abeyance*; or in the interval between the disuse of chivalrous exercises and the introduction of modern philosophy, not to have known how to pass its time and to have sunk into the most common-place formality and unmeaning apathy. But lo! at a signal given, or rather prompted by that most powerful of all calls, the want of something to do, all rush into the lists, having armed themselves anew with the shining panoply of science and of letters, with an eagerness, a perseverance, a dexterity, and a success that are truly astonishing. The higher classes have of late taken the lead almost as much in arts as they formerly did in arms, when the last was the only prescribed mode of distinguishing themselves from the rabble whom they treated as serfs and churls. The prevailing cue at present is to regard mere authors (who are not also of gentle blood) as dull, illiterate, poor creatures, a sort of pretenders to taste and elegance, and adventurers in intellect. The true adepts in black-letter are knights of the shire: the sworn patentees of Parnassus are Peers of the Realm. Not to pass for a literary quack, you must procure a diploma from the College of

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Heralds. A dandy conceals a bibliomanist: our belles are *blue-stuckings*. The Press is so entirely monopolised by beauty, birth, or importance in the State, that an author by profession resigns the field to the crowd of well-dressed competitors, out of modesty or pride, is fain to keep out of sight—

‘Or write by stealth and blush to find it fame!’

Lord Byron used to boast that he could bring forward a dozen young men of fashion who could beat all the regular authors at their several weapons of wit or argument; and though I demur to the truth of the assertion, yet there is no saying till the thing is tried. Young gentlemen make *very pretty sparrers*, but are not the ‘ugliest customers’ when they take off the gloves. Lord Byron himself was in his capacity of author an *out-and-outer*; but then it was at the expense of other things, for he could not talk except in short sentences and sarcastic allusions, he had no ready resources; all his ideas moulded themselves into stanzas, and all his ardour was carried off in rhyme. The channel of his pen was worn deep by habit and power; the current of his thoughts flowed strong in it, and nothing remained to supply the neighbouring flats and shallows of miscellaneous conversation, but a few sprinklings of wit or gushes of spleen. An intense purpose concentrated and gave a determined direction to his energies, that ‘held on their way, unslacked of motion.’ The track of his genius was like a volcanic eruption, a torrent of burning lava, full of heat and splendour and headlong fury, that left all dry, cold, hard, and barren behind it! To say nothing of a host of female authors, a bright galaxy above our heads, there is no young lady of fashion in the present day, scarce a boarding-school girl, that is not mistress of as many branches of knowledge as would set up half-a-dozen literary hacks. In lieu of the sampler and the plain-stitch of our grandmothers, they have so many hours for French, so many for Italian, so many for English grammar and composition, so many for geography and the use of the globes, so many for history, so many for botany, so many for painting, music, dancing, riding, &c. One almost wonders how so many studies are crammed into the twenty-four hours; or how such fair and delicate creatures can master them without spoiling the smoothness of their brows, the sweetness of their tempers, or the graceful simplicity of their manners. A girl learns French (not only to read, but to speak it) in a few months, while a boy is as many years in learning to construe Latin. Why so? Chiefly because the one is treated as a *bagatelle* or agreeable relaxation; the other as a serious task or necessary evil. Education, a very few years back, was looked upon as a hardship, and enforced by

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menaces and blows, instead of being carried on (as now) as an amusement and under the garb of pleasure, and with the allurements of self-love. It is found that the products of the mind flourish better and shoot up more quickly in the sunshine of good-humour and in the air of freedom, than under the frowns of sullenness, or the shackles of authority. 'The labour we delight in physics pain.' The idlest people are not those who have most leisure-time to dispose of as they choose: take away the feeling of compulsion, and you supply a motive for application, by converting a toil into a pleasure. This makes nearly all the difference between the hardest drudgery and the most delightful exercise—not the degree of exertion, but the motive and the accompanying sensation. Learning does not gain proselytes by the austerity or awfulness of its looks. By representing things as so difficult, and as exacting such dreadful sacrifices, and to be acquired under such severe penalties, we not only deter the student from the attempt, but lay a dead-weight upon the imagination, and destroy that cheerfulness and alacrity of spirit which is the spring of thought and action. But to return.—An author by profession reads a few works that he intends to criticise and cut up 'for a consideration,'—a *blue-stocking* by profession reads all that comes out to pass the time or satisfy her curiosity. The author has something to say about Fielding, Richardson, or even the Scotch novels: but he is soon distanced by the fair critic or overwhelmed with the contents of whole Circulating Libraries poured out upon his head without stint or intermission. He reads for an object and to live; she for the sake of reading or to talk. Be this as it may, the idle reader at present reads twenty times as many books as the learned one. The former skims the surface of knowledge, and carries away the striking points and a variety of amusing details, while the latter reserves himself for great occasions, or perhaps does nothing under the pretence of having so much to do.

' From every work he challenges *essoine*,  
For contemplation's sake.'

The *litterati* of Europe threaten at present to become the Monks of letters, and from having taken up learning as a profession, to live on the reputation of it. As gentlemen have turned authors, authors seem inclined to turn gentlemen; and enjoying the *otium cum dignitate*, to be much too refined and abstracted to condescend to the subordinate or mechanical parts of knowledge. They are too wise in general to be acquainted with anything in particular; and remain in a proud and restless ignorance of all that is within the reach of the vulgar. They are not, as of old, walking libraries or Encyclopædias, but rather certain faculties of the mind personified. They scorn the

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material and instrumental branches of inquiry, the husk and bran, and affect only the fine flour of literature—they are only to be called in to give the last polish to style, the last refinement to thought. They leave it to their drudges, the Reading Public, to accumulate the facts, to arrange the evidence, to make out the *data*, and like great painters whose pupils have got in the ground-work and the established proportions of a picture, come forward to go over the last thin glazing of the colours, or throw in the finer touches of expression. On my excusing myself to N—— for some blunder in history, by saying, ‘I really had not time to read,’—he said, ‘No, but you have time to write!’ And once a celebrated critic taking me to task as to the subjects of my pursuits, and receiving regularly the same answer to his queries, that I knew nothing of chemistry, nothing of astronomy, of botany, of law, of politics, &c. at last exclaimed somewhat impatiently—‘What the devil is it, then, you *do* know?’ I laughed, and was not very much disconcerted at the reproof, as it was just.

Modern men of letters may be divided into three classes; the mere scholar or *book-worm*, all whose knowledge is taken from books, and who may be passed by as an obsolete character, little inquired after—the literary *hack* or coffee-house politician, who gets his information mostly from hearsay, and who makes some noise indeed, but the echo of it does not reach beyond his own club or circle—and the man of real or of pretended genius, who aims to draw upon his own resources of thought or feeling, and to throw a new light upon nature and books. This last personage (if he acts up to his supposed character) has too much to do to lend himself to a variety of pursuits, or to lay himself out to please in all companies. He has a task in hand, a vow to perform; and he cannot be diverted from it by incidental or collateral objects. All the time that he does not devote to this paramount duty, he should have to himself, to repose, to lie fallow, to gather strength and recruit himself. A boxer is led into the lists that he may not waste a particle of vigour needlessly; and a leader in Parliament, on the day that he is expected to get up a grand attack or defence, is not to be pestered with the ordinary news of the day. So an author (who is, or would be thought original) has no time for *spare* accomplishments or ornamental studies. All that he intermeddles with must be marshalled to bear upon his purpose. He must be acquainted with books and the thoughts of others, but only so far as to assist him on his way, and ‘to take progression from them.’ He starts from the point where *they* left off. All that does not aid him in his new career goes for nothing, is thrown out of the account; or is a useless and splendid incumbrance. Most of his time he passes in brooding over some wayward hint or suggestion of

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a thought, nor is he bound to give any explanation of what he does with the rest. He tries to melt down truth into essences—to express some fine train of feeling, to solve some difficult problem, to start what is new, or to perfect what is old ; in a word, not to do what others can do (which in the division of mental labour he holds to be unnecessary), but to do what they all with their joint efforts cannot do. For this he is in no hurry, and must have the disposal of his leisure and the choice of his subject. The public can wait. He deems with a living poet, who is an example of his own doctrine—

—‘ That there are powers  
Which of themselves our minds impress ;  
That we can feed this mind of ours  
In a wise passiveness.’

Or I have sometimes thought that the dalliance of the mind with Fancy or with Truth might be described almost in the words of Andrew Marvell’s address ‘ To his Coy Mistress ’ :—

‘ Had we but world enough and time,  
This toying, Lady, were no crime ;  
We would sit down, and think which way  
To walk and pass our love’s long day.  
Thou by the Indian Ganges’ side  
Shouldst rubies find ; I by the tide  
Of Humber would complain. I would  
Love you ten years before the flood ;  
And you should, if you please, refuse  
Till the conversion of the Jews.  
My contemplative love should grow  
Vaster than empires, and more slow.  
An hundred years should go to praise  
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze ;  
Two hundred to adore each breast,  
But thirty thousand to the rest ;  
An age at least to every part,  
And the last age should show your heart :  
For, lady, you deserve this state ;  
Nor would I love at lower rate ! ’

The aspiring poet or prose-writer undertakes to do a certain thing ; and if he succeeds, it is enough. While he is intent upon that or asleep, others may amuse themselves how they can with any topic that happens to be afloat and all the eloquence they are masters of, so that they do not disturb the champion of truth, or the proclaimer of beauty to the world. The Conversation of Lords, on the contrary, is to this like a newspaper to a book—the latter treats well or ill of one subject, and leads to a conclusion on one point ; the other is made up of all sorts of things jumbled together, debates in parlia-

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ment, law-reports, plays, operas, concerts, routs, levees, fashions, auctions, the last fight, foreign news, deaths, marriages, and *crim-cons*, bankruptcies, and quack medicines; and a large allowance is frequently to be made, besides the natural confusion of the subjects, for *cross-readings* in the speaker's mind!<sup>1</sup> Or, to take another illustration, fashionable conversation has something theatrical or *melo-dramatic* in it; it is got up for immediate effect, it is calculated to make a great display, there is a profusion of paint, scenery, and dresses, the music is loud, there are banquets and processions, you have the dancers from the Opera, the horses from Astley's, and the elephant from Exeter 'Change, the stage is all life, bustle, noise and glare, the audience brilliant and delighted, and the whole goes off in a blaze of phosphorus; but the dialogue is poor, the story improbable, the critics shake their heads in the pit, and the next day the piece is *damned*!

In short, a man of rank and fortune takes the adventitious and ornamental part of letters, the obvious, popular, fashionable, that serves to amuse at the time, or minister to the cravings of vanity, without laying a very heavy tax on his own understanding, or the patience of his hearers. He furnishes his mind as he does his house, with what is showy, striking, and of the newest pattern: he mounts his *hobby* as he does his horse, which is brought to his door for an airing, and which (should it prove restive or sluggish) he turns away for another; or like a child at a fair, gets into a round-about of knowledge, till his head becomes giddy, runs from sight to sight, from booth to booth, and like the child, goes home loaded with trinkets, gew-gaws, and rattles. He does not pore and pine over an idea (like some poor hypochondriac) till it becomes impracticable, unsociable, incommunicable, absorbed in mysticism, and lost in minuteness: he is not upon oath never to utter anything but oracles, but rattles away in a fine careless hair-brained dashing manner, hit or miss, and succeeds

<sup>1</sup> As when a person asks you 'whether you do not find a strong resemblance between Rubens's pictures and Quarles's poetry?'—which is owing to the critic's having lately been at Antwerp and bought an edition of Quarles's Emblems. Odd combinations must take place where a number of ideas are brought together, with only a thin, hasty partition between them, and without a sufficient quantity of judgment to discriminate. An Englishman, of some apparent consequence passing by the St. Peter Martyr of Titian at Venice, observed 'It was a copy of the same subject by Domenichino at Bologna.' This betrayed an absolute ignorance both of Titian and of Domenichino, and of the whole world of art: yet unless I had also seen the St. Peter at Bologna, this connoisseur would have had the advantage of me, two to one, and might have disputed the precedence of the two pictures with me, but that chronology would have come to my aid. Thus persons who travel from place to place, and roam from subject to subject, make up by the extent and discursiveness of their knowledge for the want of truth and refinement in their conception of the objects of it.

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the better for it. Nor does he prose over the same stale round of politics and the state of the nation (with the coffee-house politician), but launches out with freedom and gaiety into whatever has attraction and interest in it, 'runs the great circle, and is still at home.' He is inquisitive, garrulous, credulous, sanguine, florid,—neither pedantic nor vulgar. Neither is he intolerant, exclusive, bigoted to one set of opinions or one class of individuals. He clothes an abstract theory with illustrations from his own experience and observation, hates what is dry and dull, and throws in an air of high health, buoyant spirits, fortune and splendid connections to give animation and vividness to what perhaps might otherwise want it. He selects what is palpable without being gross or trivial, lends it colour from the flush of success, and elevation from the distinctions of rank. He runs on and never stops for an answer, rather dictating to others than endeavouring to ascertain their opinions, solving his own questions, improving upon their hints, and bearing down or precluding opposition by a good-natured loquacity or stately dogmatism. All this is perhaps more edifying as a subject of speculation than delightful in itself. Shakespear somewhere says—'A man's mind is parcel of his fortunes,'—and I think the inference will be borne out in the present case. I should guess that in the prevailing tone of fashionable society or aristocratic literature would be found all that variety, splendour, facility, and startling effect which corresponds with external wealth, magnificence of appearance, and a command of opportunity; while there would be wanting whatever depends chiefly on intensity of pursuit, on depth of feeling, and on simplicity and independence of mind joined with straitened fortune. Prosperity is a great teacher; adversity is a greater. Possession pampers the mind; privation trains and strengthens it. Accordingly, we find but one really great name (Lord Bacon) in this rank of English society, where superiority is taken for granted, and reflected from outward circumstances. The rest are in the second class. Lord Bolingbroke, whom Pope idolised (and it pains me that all his idols are not mine) was a boastful empty moulder! I never knew till the other day, that Lord Bolingbroke was the model on which Mr. Pitt formed himself. He was his *Magnus Apollo*; and no wonder. The late Minister used to lament it as the great desideratum of English literature, that there was no record anywhere existing of his speeches as they were spoken, and declared that he would give any price for one of them reported as speeches were reported in the newspapers in our time. Being asked which he thought the best of his written productions, he would answer, raising his eyebrows and deepening the tones of his voice to a sonorous bass—'Why, undoubtedly, Sir, the Letter to Sir William

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Wyndham is the most masterly of all his writings, and the first composition for wit and eloquence in the English language; '—and then he would give his reasons at great length and *con amore*, and say that Junius had formed himself entirely upon it. Lord Bolingbroke had, it seems, a house next-door to one belonging to Lord Chatham at Walham-Green; and as the gardens joined, they could hear Lord Bolingbroke walking out with the company that came to see him in his retirement, and elaborately declaiming politics to the old lords and statesmen that were with him, and philosophy to the younger ones. Pitt learned this story from his father when a boy. This account, interesting in itself, was to me the more interesting and extraordinary, as it had always appeared to me that Mr. Pitt was quite an original, *sui generis*,

' As if a man were author of himself,  
And own'd no other kin '—

that so far from having a model or idol that he looked up to and grounded himself upon, he had neither admiration nor consciousness of any thing existing out of himself, and that he lived solely in the sound of his own voice and revolved in the circle of his own hollow and artificial periods. I have it from the same authority that he thought Cobbett the best writer and Horne Tooke the cleverest man of the day. His hatred of Wyndham was excessive and mutual.—Perhaps it may be said that Lord Chatham was a first-rate man in his way, and I incline to think it; but he was a self-made man, bred in a camp, not in a court, and his rank was owing to his talents.<sup>1</sup>

## ESSAY XVII

### ON THE WANT OF MONEY

It is hard to be without money. To get on without it is like travelling in a foreign country without a passport—you are stopped, suspected, and made ridiculous at every turn, besides being subjected to the most serious inconveniences. The want of money I here allude to is not altogether that which arises from absolute poverty—

<sup>1</sup> There are few things more contemptible than the conversation of mere *men of the town*. It is made up of the technicalities and cant of all professions, without the spirit or knowledge of any. It is flashy and vapid, or is like the rinsings of different liquors at a night-cellar instead of a bottle of fine old port. It is without body or clearness, and a heap of affectation. In fact, I am very much of the opinion of that old Scotch gentleman who owned that 'he preferred the dullest book he had ever read to the most brilliant conversation it had ever fallen to his lot to hear



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for where there is a downright absence of the common necessities of life, this must be remedied by incessant hard labour, and the least we can receive in return is a supply of our daily wants—but that uncertain, casual, precarious mode of existence, in which the temptation to spend remains after the means are exhausted, the want of money joined with the hope and possibility of getting it, the intermediate state of difficulty and suspense between the last guinea or shilling and the next that we may have the good luck to encounter. This gap, this unwelcome interval constantly recurring, however shabbily got over, is really full of many anxieties, misgivings, mortifications, meannesses, and deplorable embarrassments of every description. I may attempt (this essay is not a fanciful speculation) to enlarge upon a few of them.

It is hard to go without one's dinner through sheer distress, but harder still to go without one's breakfast. Upon the strength of that first and aboriginal meal, one may muster courage to face the difficulties before one, and to dare the worst: but to be roused out of one's warm bed, and perhaps a profound oblivion of care, with golden dreams (for poverty does not prevent golden dreams), and told there is nothing for breakfast, is cold comfort for which one's half-strung nerves are not prepared, and throws a damp upon the prospects of the day. It is a bad beginning. A man without a breakfast is a poor creature, unfit to go in search of one, to meet the frown of the world, or to borrow a shilling of a friend. He may beg at the corner of a street—nothing is too mean for the tone of his feelings—robbing on the highway is out of the question, as requiring too much courage, and some opinion of a man's self. It is, indeed, as old Fuller, or some worthy of that age, expresses it, 'the heaviest stone which melancholy can throw at a man,' to learn, the first thing after he rises in the morning, or even to be dunned with it in bed, that there is no loaf, tea, or butter in the house, and that the baker, the grocer, and butterman have refused to give any farther credit. This is taking one sadly at a disadvantage. It is striking at one's spirit and resolution in their very source,—the stomach—it is attacking one on the side of hunger and mortification at once; it is casting one into the very mire of humility and Slough of Despond. The worst is, to know what face to put upon the matter, what excuse to make to the servants, what answer to send to the tradespeople; whether to laugh it off, or be grave, or angry, or indifferent; in short, to know how to parry off an evil which you cannot help. What a luxury, what a God's-send in such a dilemma, to find a half-crown which had slipped through a hole in the lining of your waistcoat, a crumpled bank-note in your breeches-pocket, or a guinea clinking in the bottom of your trunk, which had

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been thoughtlessly left there out of a former heap ! Vain hope ! Unfounded illusion ! The experienced in such matters know better, and laugh in their sleeves at so improbable a suggestion. Not a corner, not a cranny, not a pocket, not a drawer has been left unrummaged, or has not been subjected over and over again to more than the strictness of a custom-house scrutiny. Not the slightest rustle of a piece of bank-paper, not the gentlest pressure of a piece of hard metal, but would have given notice of its hiding-place with electrical rapidity, long before, in such circumstances. All the variety of pecuniary resources which form a legal tender on the current coin of the realm, are assuredly drained, exhausted to the last farthing before this time. But is there nothing in the house that one can turn to account ? Is there not an old family-watch, or piece of plate, or a ring, or some worthless trinket that one could part with ? nothing belonging to one's-self or a friend, that one could raise the wind upon, till something better turns up ? At this moment an old clothes-man passes, and his deep, harsh tones sound like an intended insult to one's distress, and banish the thought of applying for his assistance, as one's eye glances furtively at an old hat or a great coat, hung up behind a closet-door. Humiliating contemplations ! Miserable uncertainty ! One hesitates, and the opportunity is gone by ; for without one's breakfast, one has not the resolution to do any thing !—The late Mr. Sheridan was often reduced to this unpleasant predicament. Possibly he had little appetite for breakfast himself ; but the servants complained bitterly on this head, and said that Mrs. Sheridan was sometimes kept waiting for a couple of hours, while they had to hunt through the neighbourhood, and beat up for coffee, eggs, and French rolls. The same perplexity in this instance appears to have extended to the providing for the dinner ; for so sharp-set were they, that to cut short a debate with a butcher's apprentice about leaving a leg of mutton without the money, the cook clapped it into the pot : the butcher's boy, probably used to such encounters, with equal coolness took it out again, and marched off with it in his tray in triumph. It required a man to be the author of *THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL*, to run the gauntlet of such disagreeable occurrences every hour of the day. There was one comfort, however, that poor Sheridan had : he did not foresee that Mr. Moore would write his Life !<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Taylor, of the Opera-House, used to say of Sheridan, that he could not pull off his hat to him in the street without its costing him fifty pounds ; and if he stopped to speak to him, it was a hundred. No one could be a stronger instance than he was of what is called *living from hand to mouth*. He was always in want of money, though he received vast sums which he must have disbursed ; and yet nobody can

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The going without a dinner is another of the miseries of wanting money, though one can bear up against this calamity better than the former, which really 'blights the tender blossom and promise of the

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tell what became of them, for he paid nobody. He spent his wife's fortune (sixteen hundred pounds) in a six weeks' jaunt to Bath, and returned to town as poor as a rat. Whenever he and his son were invited out into the country, they always went in two post-chaises and four; he in one, and his son Tom following in another. This is the secret of those who live in a round of extravagance, and are at the same time always in debt and difficulty—they throw away all the ready money they get upon any new-fangled whim or project that comes in their way, and never think of paying off old scores, which of course, accumulate to a dreadful amount. 'Such gain the cap of him who makes them fine, yet keeps his book uncrossed.' Sheridan once wanted to take Mrs. Sheridan a very handsome dress down into the country, and went to Barber and Nunn's to order it, saying he must have it by such a day, but promising they should have ready money. Mrs. Barber (I think it was) made answer that the time was short, but that ready money was a very charming thing, and that he should have it. Accordingly, at the time appointed she brought the dress, which came to five-and-twenty pounds, and it was sent in to Mr. Sheridan: who sent out a Mr. Grimm (one of his jackalls) to say he admired it exceedingly, and that he was sure Mrs. Sheridan would be delighted with it, but he was sorry to have nothing under a hundred pound bank-note in the house. She said she had come provided for such an accident, and could give change for a hundred, two hundred, or five hundred pound note, if it were necessary. Grimm then went back to his principal for farther instructions: who made an excuse that he had no stamped receipt by him. For this, Mrs. B. said, she was also provided; she had brought one in her pocket. At each message, she could hear them laughing heartily in the next room at the idea of having met with their match for once; and presently after, Sheridan came out in high good-humour, and paid her the amount of her bill, in ten, five, and one pounds. Once when a creditor brought him a bill for payment, which had often been presented before, and the man complained of its soiled and tattered state, and said he was quite ashamed to see it, 'I'll tell you what I'd advise you to do with it, my friend,' said Sheridan, 'take it home, and write it upon *parbment*!' He once mounted a horse which a horse-dealer was shewing off near a coffee-house at the bottom of St. James's-street, rode it to Tattersall's, and sold it, and walked quietly back to the spot from which he set out. The owner was furious, swore he would be the death of him; and, in a quarter of an hour afterwards they were seen sitting together over a bottle of wine in the coffee-house, the horse-jockey with the tears running down his face at Sheridan's jokes, and almost ready to hug him as an honest fellow. Sheridan's house and lobby were beset with duns every morning, who were told that Mr. Sheridan was not yet up, and shewn into the several rooms on each side of the entrance. As soon as he had breakfasted, he asked, 'Are those doors all shut, John?' and, being assured they were, marched out very deliberately between them, to the astonishment of his self-invited guests, who soon found the bird was flown. I have heard one of his old City friends declare, that such was the effect of his frank, cordial manner, and insinuating eloquence, that he was always afraid to go to ask him for a debt of long standing, lest he should borrow twice as much. A play had been put off one night, or a favourite actor did not appear, and the audience demanded to have their money back again; but when they came to the door, they were told by the check-takers there was none for them, for that Mr. Sheridan had been in the mean time, and

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day.' With one good meal, one may hold a parley with hunger and moralise upon temperance. One has time to turn one's-self and look about one—to 'screw one's courage to the sticking-place,' to graduate the scale of disappointment, and stave off appetite till supper-time. You gain time, and time in this weather-cock world is everything. You may dine at two, or at six, or seven—as most convenient. You may in the meanwhile receive an invitation to dinner, or some one (not knowing how you are circumstanced) may send you a present of a haunch of venison or a brace of pheasants from the country, or a distant relation may die and leave you a legacy, or a patron may call and overwhelm you with his smiles and bounty,

'As kind as kings upon their coronation-day;'

or there is no saying what may happen. One may wait for dinner—breakfast admits of no delay, of no interval interposed between that and our first waking thoughts.<sup>1</sup> Besides, there are shifts and devices, shabby and mortifying enough, but still available in case of need.

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had carried off all the money in the till. He used often to get the old cobbler who kept a stall under the ruins of Drury Lane to broil a beef-steak for him, and take their dinner together. On the night that Drury Lane was burnt down, Sheridan was in the House of Commons, making a speech, though he could hardly stand without leaning his hands on the table, and it was with some difficulty he was forced away, urging the plea, 'What signified the concerns of a private individual, compared to the good of the state?' When he got to Covent-Garden, he went into the Piazza Coffee-house, to steady himself with another bottle, and then strolled out to the end of the Piazza to look at the progress of the fire. Here he was accosted by Charles Kemble and Fawcett, who complimented him on the calmness with which he seemed to regard so great a loss. He declined this praise, and said—'Gentlemen, there are but three things in human life that in my opinion ought to disturb a wise man's patience. The first of these is bodily pain, and that (whatever the ancient stoics may have said to the contrary) is too much for any man to bear without flinching: this I have felt severely, and I know it to be the case. The second is the loss of a friend whom you have dearly loved; that, gentlemen, is a great evil: this I have also felt, and I know it to be too much for any man's fortitude. And the third is the consciousness of having done an unjust action. That, gentlemen, is a great evil, a very great evil, too much for any man to endure the reflection of; but that' (laying his hand upon his heart), 'but that, thank God, I have never felt!' I have been told that these were nearly the very words, except that he appealed to the *mens conscia recti* very emphatically three or four times over, by an excellent authority, Mr. Mathews the player, who was on the spot at the time, a gentleman whom the public admire deservedly, but with whose real talents and nice discrimination of character his friends only are acquainted. Sheridan's reply to the watchman who had picked him up in the street, and who wanted to know who he was, 'I am Mr. Wilberforce!'—is well known, and shews that, however frequently he might be at a loss for money, he never wanted wit!

<sup>1</sup> In Scotland, it seems, the draught of ale or whiskey with which you commence the day, is emphatically called 'taking your morning.'

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How many expedients are there in this great city (London), time out of mind and times without number, resorted to by the dilapidated and thrifty speculator, to get through this grand difficulty without utter failure! One may dive into a cellar, and dine on boiled beef and carrots for tenpence, with the knives and forks chained to the table, and jostled by greasy elbows that seem to make such a precaution not unnecessary (hunger is proof against indignity!)—or one may contrive to part with a superfluous article of wearing apparel, and carry home a mutton-chop and cook it in a garret; or one may drop in at a friend's at the dinner-hour, and be asked to stay or not; or one may walk out and take a turn in the Park, about the time, and return home to tea, so as at least to avoid the sting of the evil—the appearance of not having dined. You then have the laugh on your side, having deceived the gossips, and can submit to the want of a sumptuous repast without murmuring, having saved your pride, and made a virtue of necessity. I say all this may be done by a man without a family (for what business has a man without money with one?—*See English Malthus and Scotch Macculloch*)—and it is only my intention here to bring forward such instances of the want of money as are tolerable both in theory and practice. I once lived on coffee (as an experiment) for a fortnight together, while I was finishing the copy of a half-length portrait of a Manchester manufacturer, who had died worth a plum. I rather slurred over the coat, which was a reddish brown, ‘of formal cut,’ to receive my five guineas, with which I went to market myself, and dined on sausages and mashed potatoes, and while they were getting ready, and I could hear them hissing in the pan, read a volume of *Gil Blas*, containing the account of the fair Aurora. This was in the days of my youth. Gentle reader, do not smile! Neither Monsieur de Very, nor Louis XVIII., over an oyster-pâté, nor Apicius himself, ever understood the meaning of the word *luxury*, better than I did at that moment! If the want of money has its drawbacks and disadvantages, it is not without its contrasts and counterbalancing effects, for which I fear nothing else can make us amends. Amelia's *hashed mutton* is immortal; and there is something amusing, though carried to excess and caricature (which is very unusual with the author), in the contrivances of old Caleb, in ‘*The Bride of Lammermuir*,’ for raising the wind at breakfast, dinner, and supper-time. I recollect a ludicrous instance of a disappointment in a dinner which happened to a person of my acquaintance some years ago. He was not only poor but a very poor creature, as will be imagined. His wife had laid by fourpence (their whole remaining stock) to pay for the baking of a shoulder of mutton and potatoes, which they had in the house, and on her return home

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from some errand, she found he had expended it in purchasing a new string for a guitar. On this occasion a witty friend quoted the lines from Milton :

‘ And ever against *eating* cares,  
Wrap me in soft Lydian airs ! ’

Defoe, in his *Life of Colonel Jack*, gives a striking picture of his young beggarly hero sitting with his companion for the first time in his life at a three-penny ordinary, and the delight with which he relished the hot smoking soup, and the airs with which he called about him—‘ and every time,’ he says, ‘ we called for bread, or beer, or whatever it might be, the waiter answered, “ coming, gentlemen, coming ; ” and this delighted me more than all the rest ! ’ It was about this time, as the same pithy author expresses it, ‘ the Colonel took upon him to wear a shirt ! ’ Nothing can be finer than the whole of the feeling conveyed in the commencement of this novel, about wealth and finery from the immediate contrast of privation and poverty. One would think it a labour, like the Tower of Babel, to build up a beau and a fine gentleman about town. The little vagabond’s admiration of the old man at the banking-house, who sits surrounded by heaps of gold as if it were a dream or poetic vision, and his own eager anxious visits, day by day, to the hoard he had deposited in the hollow tree, are in the very foremost style of truth and nature. See the same intense feeling expressed in Luke’s address to his riches in the *City Madam*, and in the extraordinary raptures of the ‘ Spanish Rogue ’ in contemplating and hugging his ingots of pure gold and Spanish pieces of eight : to which Mr. Lamb has referred in excuse for the rhapsodies of some of our elder poets on this subject, which to our present more refined and tamer apprehensions sound like blasphemy.<sup>1</sup> In earlier times, before the diffusion of luxury, of knowledge, and other sources of enjoyment had become common, and acted as a diversion to the cravings of avarice, the passionate admiration, the idolatry, the hunger and thirst of wealth and all its precious symbols, was a kind of madness or hallucination, and Mammon was truly worshipped as a god !

It is among the miseries of the want of money, not to be able to pay your reckoning at an inn—or, if you have just enough to do that, to have nothing left for the waiter;—to be stopped at a turnpike gate, and forced to turn back;—not to venture to call a hackney-coach in a shower of rain—(when you have only one shilling left yourself, it is a *bore* to have it taken out of your pocket by a friend,

<sup>1</sup> Shylock’s lamentation over the loss of ‘ his daughter and his ducats,’ is another case in point.

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who comes into your house eating peaches in a hot summer's day, and desiring you to pay for the coach in which he visits you);—not to be able to purchase a lottery-ticket, by which you might make your fortune, and get out of all your difficulties;—or to find a letter lying for you at a country post-office, and not to have money in your pocket to free it, and be obliged to return for it the next day. The letter so unseasonably withheld may be supposed to contain money, and in this case there is a foretaste, a sort of actual possession taken through the thin folds of the paper and the wax, which in some measure indemnifies us for the delay: the bank-note, the post-bill seems to smile upon us, and shake hands through its prison bars;—or it may be a love-letter, and then the tantalisation is at its height: to be deprived in this manner of the only consolation that can make us amends for the want of money, by this very want—to fancy you can see the name—to try to get a peep at the hand-writing—to touch the seal, and yet not dare to break it open—is provoking indeed—the climax of amorous and gentlemanly distress. Players are sometimes reduced to great extremity, by the seizure of their scenes and dresses, or (what is called) *the property of the theatre*, which hinders them from acting; as authors are prevented from finishing a work, for want of money to buy the books necessary to be consulted on some material point or circumstance, in the progress of it. There is a set of poor devils, who live upon a printed *prospectus* of a work that never will be written, for which they solicit your name and half-a-crown. Decayed actresses take an annual benefit at one of the theatres; there are patriots who live upon periodical subscriptions, and critics who go about the country lecturing on poetry. I confess I envy none of these; but there are persons who, provided they can live, care not how they live—who are fond of display, even when it implies exposure; who court notoriety under every shape, and embrace the public with demonstrations of wantonness. There are genteel beggars, who send up a well-penned epistle requesting the loan of a shilling. Your snug bachelors and retired old-maids pretend they can distinguish the knock of one of these at their door. I scarce know which I dislike the most—the patronage that affects to bring premature genius into notice, or that extends its piecemeal, formal charity towards it in its decline. I hate your Literary Funds, and Funds for Decayed Artists—they are corporations for the encouragement of meanness, pretence, and insolence. Of all people, I cannot tell how it is, but players appear to me the best able to do without money. They are a privileged class. If not exempt from the common calls of necessity and business, they are enabled 'by their so potent art' to soar above them. As they make imaginary ills their own, real ones become

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imaginary, sit light upon them, and are thrown off with comparatively little trouble. Their life is theatrical—its various accidents are the shifting scenes of a play—rags and finery, tears and laughter, a mock-dinner or a real one, a crown of jewels or of straw, are to them nearly the same. I am sorry I cannot carry on this reasoning to actors who are past their prime. The gilding of their profession is then worn off, and shews the false metal beneath; vanity and hope (the props of their existence) have had their day; their former gaiety and carelessness serve as a foil to their present discouragements; and want and infirmities press upon them at once. ‘We know what we are,’ as Ophelia says, ‘but we know not what we shall be.’ A workhouse seems the last resort of poverty and distress—a *parish-pauper* is another name for all that is mean and to be deprecated in human existence. But that name is but an abstraction, an average term—‘within that lowest deep, a lower deep may open to receive us.’ I heard not long ago of a poor man, who had been for many years a respectable tradesman in London, and who was compelled to take shelter in one of those receptacles of age and wretchedness, and who said he could be contented with it—he had his regular meals, a nook in the chimney, and a coat to his back—but he was forced to lie three in a bed, and one of the three was out of his mind and crazy, and his great delight was, when the others fell asleep, to tweak their noses, and flourish his night-cap over their heads, so that they were obliged to lie awake, and hold him down between them. One should be quite mad to bear this. To what a point of insignificance may not human life dwindle! To what fine, agonising threads will it not cling! Yet this man had been a lover in his youth, in a humble way, and still begins his letters to an old-maid (his former flame), who sometimes comforts him by listening to his complaints, and treating him to a dish of weak tea, ‘MY DEAR MISS NANCY!’

Another of the greatest miseries of a want of money, is the tap of a dun at your door, or the previous silence when you expect it—the uneasy sense of shame at the approach of your tormentor; the wish to meet, and yet to shun the encounter; the disposition to bully; the fear of irritating; the real and the sham excuses; the submission to impertinence; the assurances of a speedy supply; the disingenuousness you practise on him and on yourself; the degradation in the eyes of others and your own. Oh! it is wretched to have to confront a just and oft-repeated demand, and to be without the means to satisfy it; to deceive the confidence that has been placed in you; to forfeit your credit; to be placed at the power of another, to be indebted to his lenity; to stand convicted of having played the knave or the fool; and to have no way left to escape contempt, but by incurring pity.



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The suddenly meeting a creditor on turning the corner of a street, whom you have been trying to avoid for months, and had persuaded you were several hundred miles off, discomposes the features and shatters the nerves for some time. It is also a serious annoyance to be unable to repay a loan to a friend, who is in want of it—nor is it very pleasant to be so hard-run, as to be induced to request the repayment. It is difficult to decide the preference between debts of honour and legal demands; both are bad enough, and almost a fair excuse for driving any one into the hands of money-lenders—to whom an application, if successful, is accompanied with a sense of being in the vulture's gripe—a reflection akin to that of those who formerly sold themselves to the devil—or, if unsuccessful, is rendered doubly galling by the smooth, civil leer of cool contempt with which you are dismissed, as if they had escaped from your clutches—not you from theirs. If any thing can be added to the mortification and distress arising from straitened circumstances, it is when vanity comes in to barb the dart of poverty—when you have a picture on which you had calculated, rejected from an Exhibition, or a manuscript returned on your hands, or a tragedy damned, at the very instant when your cash and credit are at the lowest ebb. This forlorn and helpless feeling has reached its *acme* in the prison-scene in Hogarth's *RAKE'S PROGRESS*, where his unfortunate hero has just dropped the Manager's letter from his hands, with the laconic answer written in it:—'Your play has been read, and won't do.'<sup>1</sup> To feel poverty is bad; but to feel it with the additional sense of our incapacity to shake it off, and that we have not merit enough to retrieve our circumstances—and, instead of being held up to admiration, are exposed to persecution and insult—is the last stage of human infirmity. My friend, Mr. Leigh Hunt (no one is better qualified than he to judge), thinks that the most pathetic story in the world is that of Smollett's fine gentleman and lady in gaol, who have been roughly handled by the mob for some paltry attempt at raising the wind, and she exclaims in extenuation of the pitiful figure he cuts, 'Ah! he was a fine fellow once!'

It is justly remarked by the poet, that poverty has no greater inconvenience attached to it than that of making men ridiculous. It not only has this disadvantage with respect to ourselves, but it often shews us others in a very contemptible point of view. People are not soured by misfortune, but by the reception they meet with in it. When we do not want assistance, every one is ready to obtrude it on us, as if it were advice. If we do, they shun us instantly. They

<sup>1</sup> It is provoking enough, and makes one look like a fool, to receive a printed notice of a blank in the last lottery, with a postscript hoping for your future favours.

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anticipate the increased demand on their sympathy or bounty, and escape from it as from a falling house. It is a mistake, however, that we court the society of the rich and prosperous, merely with a view to what we can get from them. We do so, because there is something in external rank and splendour that gratifies and imposes on the imagination; just as we prefer the company of those who are in good health and spirits to that of the sickly and hypochondriacal, or as we would rather converse with a beautiful woman than with an ugly one. I never knew but one man who would lend his money freely and fearlessly in spite of circumstances (if you were likely to pay him, he grew peevish, and would pick a quarrel with you). I can only account for this from a certain sanguine buoyancy and magnificence of spirit, not deterred by distant consequences, or damped by untoward appearances. I have been told by those, who shared of the same bounty, that it was not owing to generosity, but ostentation—if so, he kept his ostentation a secret from me, for I never received a hint or a look from which I could infer that I was not the lender, and he the person obliged. Neither was I expected to keep in the background or play an under-part. On the contrary, I was encouraged to do my best; my dormant faculties roused, the ease of my circumstances was on condition of the freedom and independence of my mind, my lucky hits were applauded, and I was paid to shine. I am not ashamed of such patronage as this, nor do I regret any circumstance relating to it but its termination. People endure existence even in Paris: the rows of chairs on the Boulevards are gay with smiles and dress: the saloons, they say, are brilliant; at the theatre there is Mademoiselle Mars—what is all this to me? After a certain period, we live only in the past. Give me back one single evening at Boxhill, after a stroll in the deep-empurpled woods, before Buonaparte was yet beaten, ‘with wine of attic taste,’ when wit, beauty, friendship presided at the board! Oh no! Neither the time nor friends that are fled, can be recalled!—Poverty is the test of sincerity, the touchstone of civility. Even abroad, they treat you scurvily if your remittances do not arrive regularly, and though you have hitherto lived like a *Milord Anglais*. The want of money loses us friends not worth the keeping, mistresses who are naturally jilts or coquets; it cuts us out of society, to which dress and equipage are the only introduction; and deprives us of a number of luxuries and advantages of which the only good is, that they can only belong to the possessors of a large fortune. Many people are wretched because they have not money to buy a fine horse, or to hire a fine house, or to keep a carriage, or to purchase a diamond necklace, or to go to a race-ball, or to give their servants new liveries.

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I cannot myself enter into all this. If I can *live to think, and think to live*, I am satisfied. Some want to possess pictures, others to collect libraries. All I wish is, sometimes, to see the one and read the other. Gray was mortified because he had not a hundred pounds to bid for a curious library; and the Duchess of — has immortalised herself by her liberality on that occasion, and by the handsome compliment she addressed to the poet, that ‘if it afforded him any satisfaction, she had been more than paid, by her pleasure in reading the *Elegy in a Country Church-yard*.’

Literally and truly, one cannot get on well in the world without money. To be in want of money, is to pass through life with little credit or pleasure; it is to live out of the world, or to be despised if you come into it; it is not to be sent for to court, or asked out to dinner, or noticed in the street; it is not to have your opinion consulted or else rejected with contempt, to have your acquirements carped at and doubted, your good things disparaged, and at last to lose the wit and the spirit to say them; it is to be scrutinised by strangers, and neglected by friends; it is to be a thrall to circumstances, an exile in a foreign land; to forego leisure, freedom, ease of body and mind, to be dependent on the good-will and caprice of others, or earn a precarious and irksome livelihood by some laborious employment: it is to be compelled to stand behind a counter, or to sit at a desk in some public office, or to marry your landlady, or not the person you would wish; or to go out to the East or West-Indies, or to get a situation as judge abroad, and return home with a liver-complaint; or to be a law-stationer, or a scrivener or scavenger, or newspaper reporter; or to read law and sit in court without a brief, or to be deprived of the use of your fingers by transcribing Greek manuscripts, or to be a seal engraver and pore yourself blind; or to go upon the stage, or try some of the Fine Arts; with all your pains, anxiety, and hopes, most probably to fail, or, if you succeed, after the exertions of years, and undergoing constant distress of mind and fortune, to be assailed on every side with envy, back-biting, and falsehood, or to be a favourite with the public for awhile, and then thrown into the back-ground—or a jail, by the fickleness of taste and some new favourite; to be full of enthusiasm and extravagance in youth, of chagrin and disappointment in after-life; to be jostled by the rabble because you do not ride in your coach, or avoided by those who know your worth and shrink from it as a claim on their respect or their purse; to be a burden to your relations, or unable to do any thing for them; to be ashamed to venture into crowds; to have cold comfort at home; to lose by degrees your confidence and any talent you might possess; to grow crabbed, morose, and querulous, dis-

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satisfied with every one, but most so with yourself; and plagued out of your life, to look about for a place to die in, and quit the world without any one's asking after your will. The *wiseacres* will possibly, however, crowd round your coffin, and raise a monument at a considerable expense, and after a lapse of time, to commemorate your genius and your misfortunes!

The only reason why I am disposed to envy the professions of the church or army is, that men can afford to be poor in them without being subjected to insult. A girl with a handsome fortune in a country town may marry a poor lieutenant without degrading herself. An officer is always a gentleman; a clergyman is something more. Echard's book *On the Contempt of the Clergy* is unfounded. It is surely sufficient for any set of individuals, raised above actual want, that their characters are not merely respectable, but sacred. Poverty, when it is voluntary, is never despicable, but takes an heroic aspect. What are the begging friars? Have they not put their base feet upon the necks of princes? Money as a luxury is valuable only as a passport to respect. It is one instrument of power. Where there are other admitted and ostensible claims to this, it becomes superfluous, and the neglect of it is even admired and looked up to as a mark of superiority over it. Even a strolling beggar is a popular character, who makes an open profession of his craft and calling, and who is neither worth a doit nor in want of one. The Scotch are proverbially poor and proud: we know they can remedy their poverty when they set about it. No one is sorry for them. The French emigrants were formerly peculiarly situated in England. The priests were obnoxious to the common people on account of their religion; both they and the nobles, for their politics. Their poverty and dirt subjected them to many rebuffs; but their privations being voluntarily incurred, and also borne with the characteristic patience and good-humour of the nation, screened them from contempt. I little thought, when I used to meet them walking out in the summer's-evenings at Somers' Town, in their long great-coats, their beards covered with snuff, and their eyes gleaming with mingled hope and regret in the rays of the setting sun, and regarded them with pity bordering on respect, as the last filmy vestige of the ancient regime, as shadows of loyalty and superstition still flitting about the earth and shortly to disappear from it for ever, that they would one day return over the bleeding corpse of their country, and sit like harpies, a polluted triumph, over the tomb of human liberty! To be a lord, a papist, and poor, is perhaps to some temperaments a consummation devoutly to be wished. There is all the subdued splendour of external rank, the pride of self-opinion, irritated and goaded on by petty privations

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and vulgar obloquy to a degree of morbid acuteness. Private and public annoyances must perpetually remind him of what he is, of what his ancestors were (a circumstance which might otherwise be forgotten); must narrow the circle of conscious dignity more and more, and the sense of personal worth and pretension must be exalted by habit and contrast into a refined abstraction—'pure in the last recesses of the mind'—unmixed with, or unalloyed by 'baser matter!'—It was an hypothesis of the late Mr. Thomas Wedgewood, that there is a principle of compensation in the human mind which equalises all situations, and by which the absence of any thing only gives us a more intense and intimate perception of the reality; that insult adds to pride, that pain looks forward to ease with delight, that hunger already enjoys the unsavoury morsel that is to save it from perishing; that want is surrounded with imaginary riches, like the poor poet in Hogarth, who has a map of the mines of Peru hanging on his garret walls; in short, that 'we can hold a fire in our hand by thinking on the frosty Caucasus'—but this hypothesis, though ingenious and to a certain point true, is to be admitted only in a limited and qualified sense.

There are two classes of people that I have observed who are not so distinct as might be imagined—those who cannot keep their own money in their hands, and those who cannot keep their hands from other people's. The first are always in want of money, though they do not know what they do with it. They *muddle* it away, without method or object, and without having any thing to show for it. They have not, for instance, a fine house, but they hire two houses at a time; they have not a hot-house in their garden, but a shrubbery within doors; they do not gamble, but they purchase a library, and dispose of it when they move house. A princely benefactor provides them with lodgings, where, for a time, you are sure to find them at home: and they furnish them in a handsome style for those who are to come after them. With all this sieve-like economy, they can only afford a leg of mutton and a bottle of wine, and are glad to get a lift in a common stage; whereas with a little management and the same disbursements, they might entertain a round of company and drive a smart tilbury. But they set no value upon money, and throw it away on any object or in any manner that first presents itself, merely to have it off their hands, so that you wonder what has become of it. The second class above spoken of not only make away with what belongs to themselves, but you cannot keep any thing you have from their rapacious grasp. If you refuse to lend them what you want, they insist that you *must*: if you let them have any thing to take charge of for a time (a print or a bust) they swear

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that you have given it them, and that they have too great a regard for the donor ever to part with it. You express surprise at their having run so largely in debt ; but where is the singularity while others continue to lend ? And how is this to be helped, when the manner of these sturdy beggars amounts to dragooning you out of your money, and they will not go away without your purse, any more than if they came with a pistol in their hand ? If a person has no delicacy, he has you in his power, for you necessarily feel some towards him ; and since he will take no denial, you must comply with his peremptory demands, or send for a constable, which out of respect for his character you will not do. These persons are also poor—*light come, light go*—and the bubble bursts at last. Yet if they had employed the same time and pains in any laudable art or study that they have in raising a surreptitious livelihood, they would have been respectable, if not rich. It is their facility in borrowing money that has ruined them. No one will set heartily to work, who has the face to enter a strange house, ask the master of it for a considerable loan, on some plausible and pompous pretext, and walk off with it in his pocket. You might as well suspect a highway-man of addicting himself to hard study in the intervals of his profession.

There is only one other class of persons I can think of, in connexion with the subject of this Essay—those who are always in want of money from the want of spirit to make use of it. Such persons are perhaps more to be pitied than all the rest. They live in want, in the midst of plenty—dare not touch what belongs to them, are afraid to say that their soul is their own, have their wealth locked up from them by fear and meanness as effectually as by bolts and bars, scarcely allow themselves a coat to their backs or a morsel to eat, are in dread of coming to the parish all their lives, and are not sorry when they die, to think that they shall no longer be an expense to themselves—according to the old epigram :

‘ Here lies Father Clarges,  
Who died to save charges ! ’

## ESSAY XVIII

### ON THE FEELING OF IMMORTALITY IN YOUTH

‘ Life is a pure flame, and we live by an invisible sun within us.’

—SIR THOMAS BROWN.

No young man believes he shall ever die. It was a saying of my brother’s, and a fine one. There is a feeling of Eternity in youth,

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which makes us amends for every thing. To be young is to be as one of the Immortal Gods. One half of time indeed is flown—the other half remains in store for us with all its countless treasures; for there is no line drawn, and we see no limit to our hopes and wishes. We make the coming age our own.—

‘The vast, the unbounded prospect lies before us.’

Death, old age, are words without a meaning, that pass by us like the idle air which we regard not. Others may have undergone, or may still be liable to them—we ‘bear a charmed life,’ which laughs to scorn all such sickly fancies. As in setting out on a delightful journey, we strain our eager gaze forward—

‘Bidding the lovely scenes at distance hail,’—

and see no end to the landscape, new objects presenting themselves as we advance; so, in the commencement of life, we set no bounds to our inclinations, nor to the unrestricted opportunities of gratifying them. We have as yet found no obstacle, no disposition to flag; and it seems that we can go on so for ever. We look round in a new world, full of life, and motion, and ceaseless progress; and feel in ourselves all the vigour and spirit to keep pace with it, and do not foresee from any present symptoms how we shall be left behind in the natural course of things, decline into old age, and drop into the grave. It is the simplicity, and as it were *abstractedness* of our feelings in youth, that (so to speak) identifies us with nature, and (our experience being slight and our passions strong) deludes us into a belief of being immortal like it. Our short-lived connection with existence, we fondly flatter ourselves, is an indissoluble and lasting union—a honey-moon that knows neither coldness, jar, nor separation. As infants smile and sleep, we are rocked in the cradle of our wayward fancies, and lulled into security by the roar of the universe around us—we quaff the cup of life with eager haste without draining it, instead of which it only overflows the more—objects press around us, filling the mind with their magnitude and with the throng of desires that wait upon them, so that we have no room for the thoughts of death. From that plenitude of our being, we cannot change all at once to dust and ashes, we cannot imagine ‘this sensible, warm motion, to become a kneaded clod’—we are too much dazzled by the brightness of the waking dream around us to look into the darkness of the tomb. We no more see our end than our beginning: the one is lost in oblivion and vacancy, as the other is hid from us by the crowd and hurry of approaching events. Or the grim shadow is seen lingering in the horizon, which we are doomed

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never to overtake, or whose last, faint, glimmering outline touches upon Heaven and translates us to the skies! Nor would the hold that life has taken of us permit us to detach our thoughts from present objects and pursuits, even if we would. What is there more opposed to health, than sickness; to strength and beauty, than decay and dissolution; to the active search of knowledge than mere oblivion? Or is there none of the usual advantage to bar the approach of Death, and mock his idle threats; Hope supplies their place, and draws a veil over the abrupt termination of all our cherished schemes. While the spirit of youth remains unimpaired, ere the 'wine of life is drank up,' we are like people intoxicated or in a fever, who are hurried away by the violence of their own sensations: it is only as present objects begin to pall upon the sense, as we have been disappointed in our favourite pursuits, cut off from our closest ties, that passion loosens its hold upon the breast, that we by degrees become weaned from the world, and allow ourselves to contemplate, 'as in a glass, darkly,' the possibility of parting with it for good. The example of others, the voice of experience, has no effect upon us whatever. Casualties we must avoid: the slow and deliberate advances of age we can play at *hide-and-seek* with. We think ourselves too lusty and too nimble for that blear-eyed decrepit old gentleman to catch us. Like the foolish fat scullion, in Sterne, when she hears that Master Bobby is dead, our only reflection is—'So am not I!' The idea of death, instead of staggering our confidence, rather seems to strengthen and enhance our possession and our enjoyment of life. Others may fall around us like leaves, or be mowed down like flowers by the scythe of Time: these are but tropes and figures to the unreflecting ears and overweening presumption of youth. It is not till we see the flowers of Love, Hope, and Joy, withering around us, and our own pleasures cut up by the roots, that we bring the moral home to ourselves, that we abate something of the wanton extravagance of our pretensions, or that the emptiness and dreariness of the prospect before us reconciles us to the stillness of the grave!

'Life! thou strange thing, that hast a power to feel  
Thou art, and to perceive that others are.'<sup>1</sup>

Well might the poet begin his indignant invective against an art, whose professed object is its destruction, with this animated apostrophe to life. Life is indeed a strange gift, and its privileges are most miraculous. Nor is it singular that when the splendid boon is first granted us, our gratitude, our admiration, and our delight should prevent us from reflecting on our own nothingness, or from thinking

<sup>1</sup> Fawcett's *ART OF WAR*, a poem, 1794.



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it will ever be recalled. Our first and strongest impressions are taken from the mighty scene that is opened to us, and we very innocently transfer its durability as well as magnificence to ourselves. So newly found, we cannot make up our minds to parting with it yet and at least put off that consideration to an indefinite term. Like a clown at a fair, we are full of amazement and rapture, and have no thoughts of going home, or that it will soon be night. We know our existence only from external objects, and we measure it by them. We can never be satisfied with gazing; and nature will still want us to look on and applaud. Otherwise, the sumptuous entertainment, 'the feast of reason and the flow of soul,' to which we were invited, seems little better than a mockery and a cruel insult. We do not go from a play till the scene is ended, and the lights are ready to be extinguished. But the fair face of things still shines on; shall we be called away, before the curtain falls, or ere we have scarce had a glimpse of what is going on? Like children, our step-mother Nature holds us up to see the raree-show of the universe; and then, as if life were a burthen to support, lets us instantly down again. Yet in that short interval, what 'brave sublunary things' does not the spectacle unfold; like a bubble, at one minute reflecting the universe, and the next, shook to air!—To see the golden sun and the azure sky, the outstretched ocean, to walk upon the green earth, and to be lord of a thousand creatures, to look down giddy precipices or over distant flowery vales, to see the world spread out under one's finger in a map, to bring the stars near, to view the smallest insects in a microscope, to read history, and witness the revolutions of empires and the succession of generations, to hear of the glory of Sidon and Tyre, of Babylon and Susa, as of a faded pageant, and to say all these were, and are now nothing, to think that we exist in such a point of time, and in such a corner of space, to be at once spectators and a part of the moving scene, to watch the return of the seasons, of spring and autumn, to hear

—'The stockdove plain amid the forest deep,  
That drowsy rustles to the sighing gale'—

to traverse desert wildernesses, to listen to the midnight choir, to visit lighted halls, or plunge into the dungeon's gloom, or sit in crowded theatres and see life itself mocked, to feel heat and cold, pleasure and pain, right and wrong, truth and falsehood, to study the works of art and refine the sense of beauty to agony, to worship fame and to dream of immortality, to have read Shakespear and belong to the same species as Sir Isaac Newton;<sup>1</sup> to be and to do all this, and then in a

<sup>1</sup> Lady Wortley Montague says, in one of her letters, that 'she would much

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moment to be nothing, to have it all snatched from one like a juggler's ball or a phantasmagoria ; there is something revolting and incredible

rather be a rich *effendi*, with all his ignorance, than Sir Isaac Newton, with all his knowledge.' This was not perhaps an impolitic choice, as she had a better chance of becoming one than the other, there being many rich *effendis* to one Sir Isaac Newton. The wish was not a very intellectual one. The same petulance of rank and sex breaks out every where in these *Letters*. She is constantly reducing the poets or philosophers who have the misfortune of her acquaintance, to the figure they might make at her Ladyship's levee or toilette, not considering that the public mind does not sympathise with this process of a fastidious imagination. In the same spirit, she declares of Pope and Swift, that 'had it not been for the *good-nature* of mankind, these two superior beings were entitled, by their birth and hereditary fortune, to be only a couple of link-boys.' Gulliver's Travels, and the Rape of the Lock, go for nothing in this critical estimate, and the world raised the authors to the rank of superior beings, in spite of their disadvantages of birth and fortune, *out of pure good-nature* ! So, again, she says of Richardson, that he had never got beyond the servants' hall, and was utterly unfit to describe the manners of people of quality ; till in the capricious workings of her vanity, she persuades herself that Clarissa is very like what she was at her age, and that Sir Thomas and Lady Grandison strongly resembled what she had heard of her mother and remembered of her father. It is one of the beauties and advantages of literature, that it is the means of abstracting the mind from the narrowness of local and personal prejudices, and of enabling us to judge of truth and excellence by their inherent merits alone. Woe be to the pen that would undo this fine illusion (the only reality), and teach us to regulate our notions of genius and virtue by the circumstances in which they happen to be placed ! You would not expect a person whom you saw in a servants' hall, or behind a counter, to write Clarissa ; but after he had written the work, to *pre-judge* it from the situation of the writer, is an unpardonable piece of injustice and folly. His merit could only be the greater from the contrast. If literature is an elegant accomplishment, which none but persons of birth and fashion should be allowed to excel in, or to exercise with advantage to the public, let them by all means take upon them the task of enlightening and refining mankind : if they decline this responsibility as too heavy for their shoulders, let those who do the drudgery in their stead, however inadequately, for want of their polite example, receive the meed that is their due, and not be treated as low pretenders who have encroached on the province of their betters. Suppose Richardson to have been acquainted with the great man's steward, or valet, instead of the great man himself, I will venture to say that there was more difference between him who lived in an *ideal world*, and had the genius and felicity to open that world to others, and his friend the steward, than between the lacquey and the mere lord, or between those who lived in different rooms of the same house, who dined on the same luxuries at different tables, who rode outside or inside of the same coach, and were proud of wearing or of bestowing the same tawdry livery. If the lord is distinguished from his valet by any thing else, it is by education and talent, which he has in common with our author. But if the latter shews these in the highest degree, it is asked what are his pretensions ? Not birth or fortune, for neither of these would enable him to write a Clarissa. One man is born with a title and estate, another with genius. That is sufficient ; and we have no right to question the genius for want of the *gentility*, unless the former ran in families, or could be bequeathed with a fortune, which is not the case. Were it so, the flowers of literature, like jewels and embroidery, would be confined to the fashionable circles ; and there would be no pretenders to taste or

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to sense in the transition, and no wonder that, aided by youth and warm blood, and the flush of enthusiasm, the mind contrives for a long time to reject it with disdain and loathing as a monstrous and improbable fiction, like a monkey on a house-top, that is loath, amidst its fine discoveries and specious antics, to be tumbled head-long into the street, and crushed to atoms, the sport and laughter of the multitude !

The change, from the commencement to the close of life, appears like a fable, after it has taken place ; how should we treat it otherwise than as a chimera before it has come to pass ? There are some things that happened so long ago, places or persons we have formerly seen, of which such dim traces remain, we hardly know whether it was sleeping or waking they occurred ; they are like dreams within the dream of life, a mist, a film before the eye of memory, which, as we try to recal them more distinctly, elude our notice altogether. It is but natural that the lone interval that we thus look back upon, should have appeared long and endless in prospect. There are others so distinct and fresh, they seem but of yesterday—their very vividness might be deemed a pledge of their permanence. Then, however far back our impressions may go, we find others still older (for our years are multiplied in youth) ; descriptions of scenes that we had read, and people before our time, Priam and the Trojan war ; and even then, Nestor was old and dwelt delighted on his youth, and

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elegance but those whose names were found in the court list. No one objects to Claude's Landscapes as the work of a pastrycook, or withholds from Raphael the epithet of *divine*, because his parents were not rich. This impertinence is confined to men of letters ; the evidence of the senses baffles the envy and foppery of mankind. No quarter ought to be given to this *aristocratic* tone of criticism whenever it appears. People of quality are not contented with carrying all the external advantages for their own share, but would persuade you that all the intellectual ones are packed up in the same bundle. Lord Byron was a later instance of this double and unwarrantable style of pretension—*monstrum ingens, biforme*. He could not endure a lord who was not a wit, nor a poet who was not a lord. Nobody but himself answered to his own standard of perfection. Mr. Moore carries a proxy in his pocket from some noble persons to estimate literary merit by the same rule. Lady Mary calls Fielding names, but she afterwards makes atonement by doing justice to his frank, free, hearty nature, where she says ' his spirits gave him raptures with his cook-maid, and cheerfulness when he was starving in a garret, and his happy constitution made him forget every thing when he was placed before a venison-pasty or over a flask of champagne.' She does not want shrewdness and spirit when her petulance and conceit do not get the better of her, and she has done ample and merited execution on Lord Bolingbroke. She is, however, very angry at the freedoms taken with the Great ; *smells a rat* in this indiscriminate scribbling, and the familiarity of writers with the reading public ; and inspired by her Turkish costume, foretells a French or English revolution as the consequence of transferring the patronage of letters from the *quality* to the mob, and of supposing that ordinary writers or readers can have any notions in common with their superiors.

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spoke of the race of heroes that were no more ;—what wonder that, seeing this long line of being pictured in our minds, and reviving as it were in us, we should give ourselves involuntary credit for an indeterminate period of existence ? In the Cathedral at Peterborough there is a monument to Mary, Queen of Scots, at which I used to gaze when a boy, while the events of the period, all that had happened since, passed in review before me. If all this mass of feeling and imagination could be crowded into a moment's compass, what might not the whole of life be supposed to contain ? We are heirs of the past ; we count upon the future as our natural reversion. Besides, there are some of our early impressions so exquisitely tempered, it appears that they must always last—nothing can add to or take away from their sweetness and purity—the first breath of spring, the hyacinth dipped in the dew, the mild lustre of the evening-star, the rainbow after a storm—while we have the full enjoyment of these, we must be young ; and what can ever alter us in this respect ? Truth, friendship, love, books, are also proof against the canker of time ; and while we live, but for them, we can never grow old. We take out a new lease of existence from the objects on which we set our affections, and become abstracted, impassive, immortal in them. We cannot conceive how certain sentiments should ever decay or grow cold in our breasts ; and, consequently, to maintain them in their first youthful glow and vigour, the flame of life must continue to burn as bright as ever, or rather, they are the fuel that feed the sacred lamp, that kindle 'the purple light of love,' and spread a golden cloud around our heads ! Again, we not only flourish and survive in our affections (in which we will not listen to the possibility of a change, any more than we foresee the wrinkles on the brow of a mistress), but we have a farther guarantee against the thoughts of death in our favourite studies and pursuits, and in their continual advance. Art we know is long ; life, we feel, should be so too. We see no end of the difficulties we have to encounter : perfection is slow of attainment, and we must have time to accomplish it in. Rubens complained that when he had just learnt his art, he was snatched away from it : we trust we shall be more fortunate ! A wrinkle in an old head takes whole days to finish it properly : but to catch 'the Raphael grace, the Guido air,' no limit should be put to our endeavours. What a prospect for the future ! What a task we have entered upon ! and shall we be arrested in the middle of it ? We do not reckon our time thus employed lost, or our pains thrown away, or our progress slow—we do not droop or grow tired, but 'gain new vigour at our endless task' ;—and shall Time grudge us the opportunity to finish what we have auspiciously begun, and have formed a sort of compact

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with nature to achieve? The fame of the great names we look up to is also imperishable; and shall not we, who contemplate it with such intense yearnings, imbibe a portion of ethereal fire, the *divinæ particula auræ*, which nothing can extinguish? I remember to have looked at a print of Rembrandt for hours together, without being conscious of the flight of time, trying to resolve it into its component parts, to connect its strong and sharp gradations, to learn the secret of its reflected lights, and found neither satiety nor pause in the prosecution of my studies. The print over which I was poring would last long enough; why should the idea in my mind, which was finer, more impalpable, perish before it? At this, I redoubled the ardour of my pursuit, and by the very subtlety and refinement of my inquiries, seemed to bespeak for them an exemption from corruption and the rude grasp of Death.<sup>1</sup>

Objects, on our first acquaintance with them, have that singleness and integrity of impression that it seems as if nothing could destroy or obliterate them, so firmly are they stamped and rivetted on the brain. We repose on them with a sort of voluptuous indolence, in full faith and boundless confidence. We are absorbed in the present moment, or return to the same point—idling away a great deal of time in youth, thinking we have enough and to spare. There is often a local feeling in the air, which is as fixed as if it were of marble; we loiter in dim cloisters, losing ourselves in thought and in their glimmering arches; a winding road before us seems as long as the journey of life, and as full of events. Time and experience dissipate this illusion; and by reducing them to detail, circumscribe the limits of our expectations. It is only as the pageant of life passes by and the masques turn their backs upon us, that we see through the deception, or believe that the train will have an end. In many cases, the slow progress and monotonous texture of our lives, before we mingle with the world and are embroiled in its affairs, has a tendency to aid the same feeling. We have a difficulty, when left to ourselves, and without the resource of books or some more lively pursuit, to ‘beguile the slow and creeping hours of time,’ and argue that if it moves on always at this tedious snail’s-pace, it can never come to an end. We are willing to skip over certain portions of it that separate us from favourite objects, that irritate ourselves at the unnecessary delay. The young are prodigal of life from a superabundance of it; the old are tenacious on the same score, because they have little left, and cannot enjoy even what remains of it.

For my part, I set out in life with the French Revolution, and

<sup>1</sup> Is it not this that frequently keeps artists alive so long, *viz*, the constant occupation of their minds with vivid images, with little of the *wear-and-tear* of the body?

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that event had considerable influence on my early feelings, as on those of others. Youth was then doubly such. It was the dawn of a new era, a new impulse had been given to men's minds, and the sun of Liberty rose upon the sun of Life in the same day, and both were proud to run their race together. Little did I dream, while my first hopes and wishes went hand in hand with those of the human race, that long before my eyes should close, that dawn would be overcast, and set once more in the night of despotism—'total eclipse!' Happy that I did not. I felt for years, and during the best part of my existence, *heart-whole* in that cause, and triumphed in the triumphs over the enemies of man! At that time, while the fairest aspirations of the human mind seemed about to be realised, ere the image of man was defaced and his breast mangled in scorn, philosophy took a higher, poetry could afford a deeper range. At that time, to read the 'ROBBERS' was indeed delicious, and to hear

' From the dungeon of the tower time-rent,  
That fearful voice, a famish'd father's cry,'

could be borne only amidst the fulness of hope, the crash of the fall of the strong holds of power, and the exulting sounds of the march of human freedom. What feelings the death-scene in Don Carlos sent into the soul! In that headlong career of lofty enthusiasm, and the joyous opening of the prospects of the world and our own, the thought of death crossing it, smote doubly cold upon the mind; there was a stifling sense of oppression and confinement, an impatience of our present knowledge, a desire to grasp the whole of our existence in one strong embrace, to sound the mystery of life and death, and in order to put an end to the agony of doubt and dread, to burst through our prison-house, and confront the King of Terrors in his grisly palace! . . . As I was writing out this passage, my miniature-picture when a child lay on the mantle-piece, and I took it out of the case to look at it. I could perceive few traces of myself in it; but there was the same placid brow, the dimpled mouth, the same timid, inquisitive glance as ever. But its careless smile did not seem to reproach me with having become a recreant to the sentiments that were then sown in my mind, or with having written a sentence that could call up a blush in this image of ingenuous youth!

'That time is past with all its giddy raptures.' Since the future was barred to my progress, I have turned for consolation to the past, gathering up the fragments of my early recollections, and putting them into a form that might live. It is thus, that when we find our personal and substantial identity vanishing from us, we strive to gain a reflected and substituted one in our thoughts: we do not like to

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perish wholly, and wish to bequeath our names at least to posterity. As long as we can keep alive our cherished thoughts and nearest interests in the minds of others, we do not appear to have retired altogether from the stage, we still occupy a place in the estimation of mankind, [and] exercise a powerful influence over them, and it is only our bodies that are trampled into dust or dispersed to air. Our darling speculations still find favour and encouragement, and we make as good a figure in the eyes of our descendants, nay, perhaps, a better than we did in our life-time. This is one point gained; the demands of our self-love are so far satisfied. Besides, if by the proofs of intellectual superiority we survive ourselves in this world, by exemplary virtue or unblemished faith, we are taught to ensure an interest in another and a higher state of being, and to anticipate at the same time the applauses of men and angels.

‘ Even from the tomb the voice of nature cries;  
Even in our ashes live their wonted fires.’

As we advance in life, we acquire a keener sense of the value of time. Nothing else, indeed, seems of any consequence; and we become misers in this respect. We try to arrest its few last tottering steps, and to make it linger on the brink of the grave. We can never leave off wondering how that which has ever been should cease to be, and would still live on, that we may wonder at our own shadow, and when ‘ all the life of life is flown,’ dwell on the retrospect of the past. This is accompanied by a mechanical tenaciousness of whatever we possess, by a distrust and a sense of fallacious hollowness in all we see. Instead of the full, pulpy feeling of youth, every thing is flat and insipid. The world is a painted witch, that puts us off with false shews and tempting appearances. The ease, the jocund gaiety, the unsuspecting security of youth are fled: nor can we, without flying in the face of common sense,

‘ From the last dregs of life, hope to receive  
What its first sprightly runnings could not give.’

If we can slip out of the world without notice or mischance, can tamper with bodily infirmity, and frame our minds to the becoming composure of *still-life*, before we sink into total insensibility, it is as much as we ought to expect. We do not in the regular course of nature die all at once: we have mouldered away gradually long before; faculty after faculty, attachment after attachment, we are torn from ourselves piece-meal while living; year after year takes something from us; and death only consigns the last remnant of what we were to the grave. The revulsion is not so great, and a quiet

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*euthanasia* is a winding-up of the plot, that is not out of reason or nature.

That we should thus in a manner outlive ourselves, and dwindle imperceptibly into nothing, is not surprising, when even in our prime the strongest impressions leave so little traces of themselves behind, and the last object is driven out by the succeeding one. How little effect is produced on us at any time by the books we have read, the scenes we have witnessed, the sufferings we have gone through ! Think only of the variety of feelings we experience in reading an interesting romance, or being present at a fine play—what beauty, what sublimity, what soothing, what heart-rending emotions ! You would suppose these would last for ever, or at least subdue the mind to a correspondent tone and harmony—while we turn over the page, while the scene is passing before us, it seems as if nothing could ever after shake our resolution, that ‘ treason domestic, foreign levy, nothing could touch us farther ! ’ The first splash of mud we get, on entering the street, the first pettifogging shop-keeper that cheats us out of two-pence, and the whole vanishes clean out of our remembrance, and we become the idle prey of the most petty and annoying circumstances. The mind soars by an effort to the grand and lofty : it is at home in the grovelling, the disagreeable, and the little. This happens in the height and hey-day of our existence, when novelty gives a stronger impulse to the blood and takes a faster hold of the brain, (I have known the impression on coming out of a gallery of pictures then last half a day)—as we grow old, we become more feeble and querulous, every object ‘ reverbs its own hollowness,’ and both worlds are not enough to satisfy the peevish importunity and extravagant presumption of our desires ! There are a few superior, happy beings, who are born with a temper exempt from every trifling annoyance. This spirit sits serene and smiling as in its native skies, and a divine harmony (whether heard or not) plays around them. This is to be at peace. Without this, it is in vain to fly into deserts, or to build a hermitage on the top of rocks, if regret and ill-humour follow us there : and with this, it is needless to make the experiment. The only true retirement is that of the heart ; the only true leisure is the repose of the passions. To such persons it makes little difference whether they are young or old ; and they die as they have lived, with graceful resignation.



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### ESSAY XIX

#### ON READING NEW BOOKS

'And what of this new book, that the whole world make such a rout about?'—STERNE.

I CANNOT understand the rage manifested by the greater part of the world for reading New Books. If the public had read all those that have gone before, I can conceive how they should not wish to read the same work twice over; but when I consider the countless volumes that lie unopened, unregarded, unread, and unthought-of, I cannot enter into the pathetic complaints that I hear made, that Sir Walter writes no more—that the press is idle—that Lord Byron is dead. If I have not read a book before, it is, to all intents and purposes, new to me, whether it was printed yesterday or three hundred years ago. If it be urged that it has no modern, passing incidents, and is out of date and old-fashioned, then it is so much the newer; it is farther removed from other works that I have lately read, from the familiar routine of ordinary life, and makes so much more addition to my knowledge. But many people would as soon think of putting on old armour, as of taking up a book not published within the last month, or year at the utmost. There is a fashion in reading as well as in dress, which lasts only for the season. One would imagine that books were, like women, the worse for being old;<sup>1</sup> that they have a pleasure in being read for the first time; that they open their leaves more cordially; that the spirit of enjoyment wears out with the spirit of novelty; and that, after a certain age, it is high time to put them on the shelf. This conceit seems to be followed up in practice. What is it to me that another—that hundreds or thousands have in all ages read a work? Is it on this account the less likely to give me pleasure, because it has delighted so many others? Or can I taste this pleasure by proxy? Or am I in any degree the wiser for their knowledge? Yet this might appear to be the inference. *Their* having read the work may be said to act upon us by sympathy, and the knowledge which so many other persons have of its contents deadens our curiosity and interest altogether. We set aside the subject as one on which others have made up their minds for us (as if we really could have ideas in their heads), and are quite on the alert for the next new work, teeming hot from the press, which we

<sup>1</sup> 'Laws are not like women, the worse for being old.'—*The Duke of Buckingham's Speech in the House of Lords, in Charles the Second's time.*

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shall be the first to read, criticise, and pass an opinion on. Oh, delightful ! To cut open the leaves, to inhale the fragrance of the scarcely dry paper, to examine the type, to see who is the printer (which is some clue to the value that is set upon the work), to launch out into regions of thought and invention never trod till now, and to explore characters that never met a human eye before—this is a luxury worth sacrificing a dinner-party, or a few hours of a spare morning to. Who, indeed, when the work is critical and full of expectation, would venture to dine out, or to face a coterie of blue-stockings in the evening, without having gone through this ordeal, or at least without hastily turning over a few of the first pages, while dressing, to be able to say that the beginning does not promise much, or to tell the name of the heroine ?

A new work is something in our power : we mount the bench, and sit in judgment on it : we can damn or recommend it to others at pleasure, can decry or extol it to the skies, and can give an answer to those who have not yet read it and expect an account of it ; and thus shew our shrewdness and the independence of our taste before the world have had time to form an opinion. If we cannot write ourselves, we become, by busying ourselves about it, a kind of *accessaries after the fact*. Though not the parent of the bantling that ‘ has just come into this breathing world, scarce half made up,’ without the aid of criticism and puffing, yet we are the gossips and foster-nurses on the occasion, with all the mysterious significance and self-importance of the tribe. If we wait, we must take our report from others ; if we make haste, we may dictate ours to them. It is not a race, then, for priority of information, but for precedence in tattling and dogmatising. The work last out is the first that people talk and inquire about. It is the subject on the *tapis*—the cause that is pending. It is the last candidate for success (other claims have been disposed of), and appeals for this success to us, and us alone. Our predecessors can have nothing to say to this question, however they may have anticipated us on others ; future ages, in all probability, will not trouble their heads about it ; we are the panel. How hard, then, not to avail ourselves of our immediate privilege to give sentence of life or death—to seem in ignorance of what every one else is full of—to be behind-hand with the polite, the knowing, and fashionable part of mankind—to be at a loss and dumb-founded, when all around us are in their glory, and figuring away, on no other ground than that of having read a work that we have not ! Books that are to be written hereafter cannot be criticised by us ; those that were written formerly have been criticised long ago : but a new book is the property, the prey of ephemeral criticism, which it darts triumphantly

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upon ; there is a raw thin air of ignorance and uncertainty about it, not filled up by any recorded opinion ; and curiosity, impertinence, and vanity rush eagerly into the vacuum. A new book is the fair field for petulance and coxcombry to gather laurels in—the but set up for roving opinion to aim at. Can we wonder, then, that the circulating libraries are besieged by literary dowagers and their grand-daughters, when a new novel is announced ? That Mail-Coach copies of the Edinburgh Review are or were coveted ? That the Manuscript of the Waverley romances is sent abroad in time for the French, German, or even Italian translation to appear on the same day as the original work, so that the longing Continental public may not be kept waiting an instant longer than their fellow-readers in the English metropolis, which would be as tantalising and insupportable as a little girl being kept without her new frock, when her sister's is just come home and is the talk and admiration of every one in the house ? To be sure, there is something in the taste of the times ; a modern work is expressly adapted to modern readers. It appeals to our direct experience, and to well-known subjects ; it is part and parcel of the world around us, and is drawn from the same sources as our daily thoughts. There is, therefore, so far, a natural or habitual sympathy between us and the literature of the day, though this is a different consideration from the mere circumstance of novelty. An author now alive has a right to calculate upon the living public : he cannot count upon the dead, nor look forward with much confidence to those that are unborn. Neither, however, is it true that we are eager to read all new books alike : we turn from them with a certain feeling of distaste and distrust, unless they are recommended to us by some peculiar feature or obvious distinction. Only young ladies from the boarding-school, or milliners' girls, read all the new novels that come out. It must be spoken of or against ; the writer's name must be well known or a great secret ; it must be a topic of discourse and a mark for criticism—that is, it must be likely to bring us into notice in some way—or we take no notice of it. There is a mutual and tacit understanding on this head. We can no more read all the new books that appear, than we can read all the old ones that have disappeared from time to time. A question may be started here, and pursued as far as needful, whether, if an old and worm-eaten Manuscript were discovered at the present moment, it would be sought after with the same avidity as a new and hot-pressed poem, or other popular work ? Not generally, certainly, though by a few with perhaps greater zeal. For it would not affect present interests, or amuse present fancies, or touch on present manners, or fall in with the public *egotism* in any way : it would be the work either of some obscure

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author—in which case it would want the principle of excitement ; or of some illustrious name, whose style and manner would be already familiar to those most versed in the subject, and his fame established—so that, as a matter of comment and controversy, it would only go to account on the old score : there would be no room for learned feuds and heart-burnings. Was there not a Manuscript of Cicero's talked of as having been discovered about a year ago ? But we have heard no more of it. There have been several other cases, more or less in point, in our time or near it. A Noble Lord (which may serve to shew at least the interest taken in books *not for being new*) some time ago gave 2000*l.* for a copy of the first edition of the Decameron : but did he read it ? It has been a fashion also of late for noble and wealthy persons to go to a considerable expense in ordering reprints of the old Chronicles and black-letter works. Does not this rather prove that the books did not circulate very rapidly or extensively, or such extraordinary patronage and liberality would not have been necessary ? Mr. Thomas Taylor, at the instance, I believe, of the old Duke of Norfolk, printed fifty copies in quarto of a translation of the works of Plato and Aristotle. He did not choose that a larger impression should be struck off, lest these authors should get into the hands of the vulgar. There was no danger of a run in that way. I tried to read some of the Dialogues in the translation of Plato, but, I confess, could make nothing of it : 'the logic was so different from ours !'<sup>1</sup> A startling experiment was made on this

<sup>1</sup> An expression borrowed from a voluble German scholar, who gave this as an excuse for not translating the 'Critique of Pure Reason' into English. He might as well have said seriously, that the *Rule of Three* in German was different from ours. Mr. Taylor (the Platonist as he was called) was a singular instance of a person in our time believing in the heathen mythology. He had a very beautiful wife. An impudent Frenchman, who came over to London, and lodged in the same house, made love to her, by pretending to worship her as Venus, and so thought to turn the tables on our philosopher. I once spent an evening with this gentleman at Mr. G. D.'s chambers, in Clifford's-inn, (where there was no exclusion of persons or opinions) and where we had pipes and tobacco, porter, and bread and cheese for supper. Mr. Taylor never smoked, never drank porter, and had an aversion to cheese. I remember he shewed with some triumph two of his fingers, which had been bent so that he had lost the use of them, in copying out the manuscripts of Proclus and Plotinus in a fine Greek hand. Such are the trophies of human pride ! It would be well if our deep studies often produced no other crookedness and deformity ! I endeavoured (but in vain) to learn something from the heathen philosopher as to Plato's doctrine of abstract ideas being the foundation of particular ones, which I suspect has more truth in it than we moderns are willing to admit. Another friend of mine once breakfasted with Mr. D. (the most amiable and absent of hosts), when there was no butter, no knife to cut the loaf with, and the tea-pot was without a spout. My friend after a few immaterial ceremonies, adjourned to Peel's coffee-house, close by, where he regaled himself on buttered toast, coffee, and the newspaper of the day (a newspaper possessed some

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sort of retrospective curiosity, in the case of Ireland's celebrated Shakespear forgery. The public there certainly manifested no backwardness nor lukewarmness: the enthusiasm was equal to the folly. But then the spirit exhibited on this occasion was partly critical and polemical, and it is a problem whether an actual and undoubted play of Shakespear's would have excited the same ferment; and, on the other hand, Shakespear is an essential modern. People read and go to see his real plays, as well as his pretended ones. The *fuss* made about Ossian is another test to refer to. It was its being the supposed revival of an old work (known only by scattered fragments or lingering tradition) which gave it its chief interest, though there was also a good deal of mystery and quackery concerned along with the din and stir of national jealousy and pretension. Who reads Ossian now? It is one of the reproaches brought against Buonaparte that he was fond of it when young. I cannot for myself see the objection. There is no doubt an antiquarian spirit always at work, and opposed to the spirit of novelty-hunting; but, though opposed, it is scarcely a match for it in a general and popular point of view. It is not long ago that I happened to be suggesting a new translation of Don Quixote to an enterprising bookseller; and his answer was,—'We want new Don Quixotes.' I believe I deprived the same active-minded person of a night's rest, by telling him there was the beginning of another novel by Goldsmith in existence. This, if it could be procured, would satisfy both tastes for the new and the old at once. I fear it is but a fragment, and that we must wait till a new Goldsmith appears. We may observe of late a strong craving after *Memoirs and Lives of the Dead*. But these, it may be remarked, savour so much of the real and familiar, that the persons described differ from us only in being dead, which is a reflection to our advantage: or, if remote and romantic in their interest and adventures, they require to be bolstered up in some measure by the embellishments of modern style and criticism. The accounts of Petrarch and Laura, of Abelard and Eloise, have a lusciousness and warmth in the subject which contrast quaintly and pointedly with the coldness of the grave; and, after all, we prefer Pope's Eloise and Abelard with the modern dress and flourishes, to the sublime and affecting simplicity of the original Letters.

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interest when we were young), and the only interruption to his satisfaction was the fear that his host might suddenly enter, and be shocked at his imperfect hospitality. He would probably forget the circumstance altogether. I am afraid this veteran of the old school has not received many proofs of the *archaism* of the prevailing taste; and that the corrections in his History of the University of Cambridge have cost him more than the public will ever repay him for.

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In some very just and agreeable reflections on the story of Abelard and Eloise, in a late number of a contemporary publication, there is a quotation of some lines from Lucan, which Eloise is said to have repeated in broken accents as she was advancing to the altar to receive the veil :

‘ O maxime conjux !  
O thalamis indigne meis ! Hoc juris habebat  
In tantum fortuna caput ? Cur impia nupsi,  
Si miserum factura fui ? Nunc accipe pœnas,  
Sed quas sponte luam.’ *Pharsalia*, lib. 8.

This speech, quoted by another person, on such an occasion, might seem cold and pedantic ; but from the mouth of the passionate and unaffected Eloise it cannot bear that interpretation. What sounding lines ! What a pomp, and yet what a familiar boldness in their application—‘ proud as when blue Iris bends ’ ! The reading this account brought forcibly to mind what has struck me often before—the unreasonableness of the complaint we constantly hear of the ignorance and barbarism of former ages, and the folly of restricting all refinement and literary elegance to our own. We are indeed indebted to the ages that have gone before us, and could not well do without them. But in all ages there will be found still others that have gone before with nearly equal lustre and advantage, though by distance and the intervention of multiplied excellence, this lustre may be dimmed or forgotten. Had it then no existence ? We might, with the same reason, suppose that the horizon is the last boundary and verge of the round earth. Still, as we advance, it recedes from us ; and so time from its store-house pours out an endless succession of the productions of art and genius ; and the farther we explore the obscurity, other trophies and other land-marks rise up. It is only our ignorance that fixes a limit—as the mist gathered round the mountain’s brow makes us fancy we are treading the edge of the universe ! Here was Heloise living at a period when monkish indolence and superstition were at their height—in one of those that are emphatically called the *dark ages* ; and yet, as she is led to the altar to make her last fatal vow, expressing her feelings in language quite natural to her, but from which the most accomplished and heroic of our modern females would shrink back with pretty and affected wonder and affright. The glowing and impetuous lines which she murmured, as she passed on, with spontaneous and rising enthusiasm, were engraven on her heart, familiar to her as her daily thoughts ; her mind must have been full of them to overflowing, and at the same time enriched with other stores and sources of knowledge equally elegant and impressive ; and we persist, notwithstanding this and a thousand similar circumstances,

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in indulging our surprise how people could exist, and see, and feel, in those days, without having access to our opportunities and acquirements, and how Shakespear wrote long after, *in a barbarous age* ! The mystery in this case is of our own making. We are struck with astonishment at finding a fine moral sentiment or a noble image nervously expressed in an author of the age of Queen Elizabeth ; not considering that, independently of nature and feeling, which are the same in all periods, the writers of that day, who were generally men of education and learning, had such models before them as the one that has been just referred to—were thoroughly acquainted with those masters of classic thought and language, compared with whom, in all that relates to the artificial graces of composition, the most studied of the moderns are little better than Goths and Vandals. It is true, we have lost sight of, and neglected the former, because the latter have, in a great degree, superseded them, as the elevations nearest to us intercept those farthest off ; but our not availing ourselves of this vantage-ground is no reason why our forefathers should not (who had not our superfluity of choice), and most assuredly they did study and cherish the precious fragments of antiquity, collected together in their time, ‘like sunken wreck and sumless treasures’ ; and while they did this, we need be at no loss to account for any examples of grace, of force, or dignity in their writings, if these must always be traced back to a previous source. One age cannot understand how another could subsist without its lights, as one country thinks every other must be poor for want of its physical productions. This is a narrow and superficial view of the subject : we should by all means rise above it. I am not for devoting the whole of our time to the study of the classics, or of any other set of writers, to the exclusion and neglect of nature ; but I think we should turn our thoughts enough that way to convince us of the existence of genius and learning before our time, and to cure us of an overweening conceit of ourselves, and of a contemptuous opinion of the world at large. Every civilised age and country (and of these there is not one, but a hundred) has its literature, its arts, its comforts, large and ample, though we may know nothing of them ; nor is it (except for our own sakes) important that we should.

Books have been so multiplied in our days (like the Vanity Fair of knowledge), and we have made such progress beyond ourselves in some points, that it seems at first glance as if we had monopolised every possible advantage, and the rest of the world must be left destitute and in darkness. This is the *cockneyism* (with leave be it spoken) of the nineteenth century. There is a tone of smartness and piquancy in modern writing, to which former examples may, in one

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sense, appear flat and pedantic. Our allusions are more pointed and personal: the ancients are, in this respect, formal and prosaic personages. Some one, not long ago, in this vulgar, shallow spirit of criticism (which sees every thing from its own point of view), said that the tragedies of Sophocles and Æschylus were about as good as the pieces brought out at Sadler's Wells or the Adelphi Theatre. An oration of Demosthenes is thought dry and meagre, because it is not 'full of wise saws and modern instances': one of Cicero's is objected to as flimsy and extravagant, for the same reason. There is a style in one age which does not fall in with the taste of the public in another, as it requires greater effeminacy and softness, greater severity or simplicity, greater force or refinement. Guido was more admired than Raphael in his day, because the manners were grown softer without the strength: Sir Peter Lely was thought in his to have eclipsed Vandyke—an opinion that no one holds at present: Holbein's faces must be allowed to be very different from Sir Thomas Lawrence's—yet the one was the favourite painter of Henry VIII., as the other is of George IV. What should we say in our time to the *euphuism* of the age of Elizabeth, when style was made a riddle, and the court talked in conundrums? This, as a novelty and a trial of the wits, might take for a while: afterwards, it could only seem absurd. We must always make some allowance for a change of style, which those who are accustomed to read none but works written within the last twenty years neither can nor will make. When a whole generation read, they will read none but contemporary productions. The taste for literature becomes superficial, as it becomes universal and is spread over a larger space. When ten thousand boarding-school girls, who have learnt to play on the harpsichord, are brought out in the same season, Rossini will be preferred to Mozart, as the last new composer. I remember a very genteel young couple in the boxes at Drury Lane being very much scandalised some years ago at the phrase in *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*—'an insolent piece of paper'—applied to the contents of a letter—it wanted the modern lightness and indifference. Let an old book be ever so good, it treats (generally speaking) of topics that are stale in a style that has grown 'somewhat musty'; of manners that are exploded, probably by the very ridicule thus cast upon them; of persons that no longer figure on the stage; and of interests that have long since given place to others in the infinite fluctuations of human affairs. Longinus complains of the want of interest in the Odyssey, because it does not, like the Iliad, treat of war. The very complaint we make against the latter is that it treats of nothing else; or that, as Fuseli expresses it, every thing is seen 'through the blaze of war.'



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Books of devotion are no longer read (if we read Irving's *Oration*s, it is merely that we may go as a *lounge* to see the man) : even attacks on religion are out of date and insipid. Voltaire's jests, and the *Jew's Letters* in answer (equal in wit, and more than equal in learning), repose quietly on the shelf together. We want something in England about Rent and the Poor-Laws, and something in France about the Charter—or Lord Byron. With the attempts, however, to revive superstition and intolerance, a spirit of opposition has been excited, and Pascall's *Provincial Letters* have been once more enlisted into the service. In France you meet with no one who has read the *New Heloise* : the *Princess of Cleves* is not even mentioned in these degenerate days. Is it not provoking with us to see the *Beggar's Opera* cut down to two acts, because some of the allusions are too broad, and others not understood ? And in America—that Van Diemen's Land of letters—this sterling satire is hooted off the stage, because fortunately they have no such state of manners as it describes before their eyes ; and because, unfortunately, they have no conception of any thing but what they see. America is singularly and awkwardly situated in this respect. It is a new country with an old language ; and while every thing about them is of a day's growth, they are constantly applying to us to know what to think of it, and taking their opinions from our books and newspapers with a strange mixture of servility and of the spirit of contradiction. They are an independent state in politics : in literature they are still a colony from us—not out of their leading strings, and strangely puzzled how to determine between the Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews. We have naturalised some of their writers, who had formed themselves upon us. This is at once a compliment to them and to ourselves. Amidst the scramble and lottery for fame in the present day, besides puffing, which may be regarded as the hot-bed of reputation, another mode has been attempted by *transplanting* it ; and writers who are set down as drivellers at home, shoot up great authors on the other side of the water ; pack up their all—a title-page and sufficient impudence ; and a work, of which the *floci-nauci-nihili-pili-fication*, in Shenstone's phrase, is well known to every competent judge, is *placarded* into eminence, and ' flames in the forehead of the morning sky ' on the walls of Paris or St. Petersburg. I dare not mention the instances, but so it is. Some reputations last only while the possessors live, from which one might suppose that they gave themselves a character for genius : others are cried up by their gossiping acquaintances, as long as they give dinners, and make their houses places of polite resort ; and, in general, in our time, a book may be considered to have passed the ordeal that is mentioned at all three months after it is printed. Immortality is not even a dream—

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a boy's conceit ; and posthumous fame is no more regarded by the author than by his bookseller.<sup>1</sup>

This idle, dissipated turn seems to be a set-off to, or the obvious reaction of, the exclusive admiration of the ancients, which was formerly the fashion : as if the sun of human intellect rose and set at Rome and Athens, and the mind of man had never exerted itself to any purpose since. The ignorant, as well as the adept, were charmed only with what was obsolete and far-fetched, wrapped up in technical terms and in a learned tongue. Those who spoke and wrote a language which hardly any one at present even understood, must of course be wiser than we. Time, that brings so many reputations to decay, had embalmed others and rendered them sacred. From an implicit faith and overstrained homage paid to antiquity, we of the modern school have taken too strong a bias to what is new ; and divide all wisdom and worth between ourselves and posterity,—not a very formidable rival to our self-love, as we attribute all its advantages to ourselves, though we pretend to owe little or nothing to our predecessors. About the time of the French Revolution, it was agreed that the world had hitherto been in its dotage or its infancy ; and that Mr. Godwin, Condorcet, and others were to begin a new race of men—a new epoch in society. Every thing up to that period was to be set aside as puerile or barbarous ; or, if there were any traces of thought and manliness now and then discoverable, they were to be regarded with wonder as prodigies—as irregular and fitful starts in that long sleep of reason and night of philosophy. In this liberal spirit Mr. Godwin composed an *Essay*, to prove that, till the publication of *The Enquiry concerning Political Justice*, no one knew how to write a word of common grammar, or a style that was not utterly uncouth, incongruous, and feeble. Addison, Swift, and Junius were included in this censure. The English language itself might be supposed to owe its stability and consistency, its roundness and polish, to the whirling motion of the French Revolution. Those who had gone before us were, like our grandfathers and grandmothers, decrepit, superannuated people, blind and dull ; poor creatures, like flies in winter, without pith or marrow in them. The past was barren of interest—had neither thought nor object worthy to arrest our attention ; and the future would be equally a senseless void, except as we projected ourselves and our theories into it. There is nothing I hate more than I do this exclusive, upstart spirit.—

<sup>1</sup> When a certain poet was asked if he thought Lord Byron's name would live three years after he was dead, he answered, 'Not three days, Sir !' This was premature : it has lasted above a year. His works have been translated into French, and there is a *Caffé Byron* on the Boulevards. Think of a *Caffé Wordsworth* on the Boulevards !

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'By Heavens, I'd rather be  
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn,  
So might I, standing on some pleasant lea,  
Catch glimpses that might make me less forlorn,  
Have sight of Proteus coming from the sea,  
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.'

WORDSWORTH'S SONNETS.

Neither do I see the good of it even in a personal and interested point of view. By despising all that has preceded us, we teach others to despise ourselves. Where there is no established scale nor rooted faith in excellence, all superiority—our own as well as that of others—soon comes to the ground. By applying the wrong end of the magnifying-glass to all objects indiscriminately, the most respectable dwindle into insignificance, and the best are confounded with the worst. Learning, no longer supported by opinion, or genius by fame, is cast into the mire, and 'trampled under the hoofs of a swinish multitude.' I would rather endure the most blind and bigotted respect for great and illustrious names, than that pitiful, grovelling humour which has no pride in intellectual excellence, and no pleasure but in decrying those who have given proofs of it, and reducing them to its own level. If, with the diffusion of knowledge, we do not gain an enlargement and elevation of views, where is the benefit? If, by tearing asunder names from things, we do not leave even the name or shadow of excellence, it is better to let them remain as they were; for it is better to have something to admire than nothing—names, if not things—the shadow, if not the substance—the tinsel, if not the gold. All can now read and write equally; and, it is therefore presumed, equally well. Any thing short of this sweeping conclusion is an invidious distinction; and those who claim it for themselves or others are *exclusionists* in letters. Every one at least can call names—can invent a falsehood, or repeat a story against those who have galled their pragmatistical pretensions by really adding to the stock of general amusement or instruction. Every one in a crowd has the power to throw dirt: nine out of ten have the inclination. It is curious that, in an age when the most universally-admitted claim to public distinction is literary merit, the attaining this distinction is almost a sure title to public contempt and obloquy.<sup>1</sup> They cry you up, because you are unknown, and do not excite their jealousy; and run you down, when they have thus distinguished you, out of envy and spleen at the very idol they have set up. A public favourite is 'kept like an apple in the jaw of an ape—first mouthed, to be after-

<sup>1</sup> Is not this partly owing to the disappointment of the public at finding any defect in their idol?

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wards swallowed. When they need what you have gleaned, it is but squeezing you, and sponge, you shall be dry again.' At first they think only of the pleasure or advantage they receive: but, on reflection, they are mortified at the superiority implied in this involuntary concession, and are determined to be even with you the very first opportunity. What is the prevailing spirit of modern literature? To defame men of letters. What are the publications that succeed? Those that pretend to teach the public that the persons they have been accustomed unwittingly to look up to as the lights of the earth are no better than themselves, or a set of vagabonds or miscreants that should be hunted out of society.<sup>1</sup> Hence men of letters, losing their self-respect, become government-tools, and prostitute their talents to the most infamous purposes, or turn *dandy scribblers*, and set up for gentlemen authors in their own defence. I like the Order of the Jesuits better than this: they made themselves respected by the laity, kept their own secret, and did not prey on one another. Resume then, oh! Learning, thy robe pontifical; clothe thyself in pride and purple; join the sacred to the profane; wield both worlds; instead of twopenny trash and mechanics' magazines, issue bulls and decretals; say not, let there be light, but darkness visible; draw a bandage over the eyes of the ignorant and unlettered; hang the terrors of superstition and despotism over them;—and for thy pains they will bless thee: children will pull off their caps as thou dost pass; women will courtesy; the old will wipe their beards; and thou wilt rule once more over the base serving people, clowns, and nobles, with a rod of iron!

<sup>1</sup> An old friend of mine, when he read the abuse and billingsgate poured out in certain Tory publications, used to congratulate himself upon it as a favourable sign of the times, and of the progressive improvement of our manners. Where we now called names, we formerly burnt each other at a stake; and all the malice of the heart flew to the tongue and vented itself in scolding, instead of crusades and *auto-da-fés*—the nobler revenge of our ancestors for a difference of opinion. An author now libels a prince; and, if he takes the law of him or throws him into gaol, it is looked upon as a harsh and ungentlemanly proceeding. He, therefore, gets a dirty Secretary to employ a dirty bookseller, to hire a set of dirty scribblers, to pelt him with dirt and cover him with blackguard epithets—till he is hardly in a condition to walk the streets. This is hard measure, no doubt, and base ingratitude on the part of the public, according to the imaginary dignity and natural precedence which authors take of kings; but the latter are men, and will have their revenge where they can get it. They have no longer their old summary appeal—their will may still be good—to the dungeon and the dagger. Those who 'speak evil of dignities' may, therefore, think themselves well off in being merely *sent to Coventry*; and, besides, if they have *pluck*, they can make a Parthian retreat, and shoot poisoned arrows behind them. The good people of Florence lift up their hands when they are shewn the caricatures in the Queen's Matrimonial Ladder and ask if they are really a likeness of the King?

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### ESSAY XX

#### ON MEANS AND ENDS

'We work by wit, and not by witchcraft.'—IAGO.

It is impossible to have things done without doing them. This seems a truism; and yet what is more common than to suppose that we shall find things done, merely by wishing it? *To put the will for the deed* is as usual in practice as it is contrary to common sense. There is, in fact, no absurdity, no contradiction, of which the mind is not capable. This weakness is, I think, more remarkable in the English than in any other people, in whom (to judge by what I discover in myself) the will bears great and disproportioned sway. We desire a thing: we contemplate the end intently, and think it done, neglecting the necessary means to accomplish it. The strong tendency of the mind towards it, the internal effort it makes to give birth to the object of its idolatry, seems an adequate cause to produce the wished-for effect, and is in a manner identified with it. This is more particularly the case in what relates to the *Fine Arts*, and will account for some phenomena in the national character.

The English style is distinguished by what are called *ébauches*<sup>1</sup>—rude sketches, or violent attempts at effect, with a total inattention to the details or delicacy of finishing. Now this, I apprehend, proceeds not exactly from grossness of perception, but from the wilfulness of our characters, our determination to have every thing our own way without any trouble, or delay, or distraction of mind. An object strikes us: we see and feel the whole effect at once. We wish to produce a likeness of it; but we wish to transfer the impression to the canvas as it is conveyed to us, simultaneously and intuitively—that is, to stamp it there at a blow—or, otherwise, we turn away with impatience and disgust, as if the means were an obstacle to the end, and every attention to the mechanical process were a deviation from our original purpose. We thus degenerate, by repeated failures, into a slovenly style of art; and that which was at first an undisciplined and irregular impulse, becomes a habit, and then a theory. It seems a little strange that the zealous devotion to the end should produce aversion to the means; but so it is: neither is it, however irrational, altogether unnatural. That which we are struck with, which we are enamoured of, is the general appearance or result; and it would certainly be most desirable to produce

<sup>1</sup> Properly, *daubs*.

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the effect we aim at by a word or wish, if it were possible, without being taken up with the mechanical drudgery or pettiness of detail, or dexterity of execution, which, though they are essential and component parts of the work, do not enter into our thoughts, or form any part of our contemplation. In a word, the hand does not keep pace with the eye; and it is the desire that it should, that causes all the contradiction and confusion. We would have a face to start out from the canvas at once—not feature by feature, or touch by touch; we would be glad to convey an attitude or a divine expression to the spectator by a stroke of the pencil, as it is conveyed by a glance of the eye, or by the magic of feeling, independently of measurements, and distances, and foreshortening, and numberless minute particulars, and all the instrumentality of the art. We may find it necessary, on a cool calculation, to go through and make ourselves masters of these; but, in so doing, we submit only to necessity, and they are still a diversion to, and a suspension of, our favourite purpose for the time—at least unless practice has given that facility which almost identifies the two together, and makes the process an unconscious one. The end thus devours up the means; or our eagerness for the one, where it is strong and unchecked, renders us in proportion impatient of the other. So we view an object at a distance, which excites in us an inclination to visit it: this, after many tedious steps and intricate windings, we do; but, if we could fly, we should never consent to go on foot. The mind, however, has wings, though the body has not; and, wherever the imagination can come into play, our desires outrun their accomplishment. Persons of this extravagant humour should addict themselves to eloquence or poetry, where the thought ‘leaps at once to its effect,’ and is wafted, in a metaphor or an apostrophe, ‘from Indus to the Pole’; though even there we should find enough, in the preparatory and mechanical parts of those arts, to try our patience and mortify our vanity! The first and strongest impulse of the mind is to achieve any object, on which it is set, at once, and by the shortest and most decisive means; but, as this cannot always be done, we ought not to neglect other more indirect and subordinate aids; nor should we be tempted to do so, but that the delusions of the will interfere with the convictions of the understanding, and what we ardently wish, we fancy to be both possible and true. Let us take the instance of copying a fine picture. We are full of the effect we intend to produce; and so powerfully does this prepossession affect us, that we imagine we have produced it, in spite of the evidence of our senses and the suggestions of friends. In truth, after a number of violent and anxious efforts to strike off a resemblance which we passionately long for, it seems an injustice not to have succeeded; it

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is too late to retrace our steps, and begin over again in a different method ; we prefer even failure to arriving at our end by petty, mechanical tricks and rules ; we have copied Titian or Rubens in the spirit in which they ought to be copied ; though the likeness may not be perfect, there is a look, a tone, a *something*, which we chiefly aimed at, and which we persuade ourselves, seeing the copy only through the dazzled, hectic flush of feverish imagination, we have really given ; and thus we persist, and make fifty excuses, sooner than own our error, which would imply its abandonment ; or, if the light breaks in upon us, through all the disguises of sophistry and self-love, it is so painful that we shut our eyes to it. The more evident our failure, the more desperate the struggles we make to conceal it from ourselves, to stick to our original determination, and end where we began.

What makes me think that this is the real stumbling-block in our way, and not mere rusticity or want of discrimination, is that you will see an English artist admiring and thrown into downright raptures by the tucker of Titian's *Mistress*, made up of an infinite number of little delicate folds ; and, if he attempts to copy it, he proceeds deliberately to omit all these details, and dash it off by a single smear of his brush. This is not ignorance, or even laziness, I conceive, so much as what is called *jumping at a conclusion*. It is, in a word, an overweening presumption. 'A wilful man must have his way.' He sees the details, the varieties, and their effect : he sees and is charmed with all this ; but he would reproduce it with the same rapidity and unembarrassed freedom that he sees it—or not at all. He scorns the slow but sure method, to which others conform, as tedious and inanimate. The mixing his colours, the laying in the ground, the giving all his attention to a minute break or nice gradation in the several lights and shades, is a mechanical and endless operation, very different from the delight he feels in studying the effect of all these, when properly and ably executed. *Quam nihil ad tuum, Papiniane, ingenium!* Such fooleries are foreign to his refined taste and lofty enthusiasm ; and a doubt crosses his mind, in the midst of his warmest raptures, how Titian could resolve upon the drudgery of going through them, or whether it was not rather owing to extreme facility of hand, and a sort of trick in laying on the colours, abridging the mechanical labour ! No one wrote or talked more eloquently about Titian's harmony and clearness of colouring than the late Mr. Barry—discoursing of his greens, his blues, his yellows, 'the little red and white of which he composed his flesh-colour,' *con amore* ; yet his own colouring was dead and dingy, and, if he had copied a Titian, he would have made it a mere daub, leaving out all that caused his wonder or admiration, or that induced him to copy it after the English or Irish fashion.

## ON MEANS AND ENDS

We not only grudge the labour of beginning, but we stop short, for the same reason, when we are near touching the goal of success, and, to save a few last touches, leave a work unfinished and an object unattained. The immediate steps, the daily gradual improvement, the successive completion of parts, give us no pleasure; we strain at the final result; we wish to have the whole done, and, in our anxiety to get it off our hands, say *it will do*, and lose the benefit of all our pains by stinting a little more, and being unable to command a little patience. In a day or two, we will suppose, a copy of a fine Titian would be as like as we could make it: the prospect of this so enchants us, that we skip the intervening space, see no great use in going on with it, fancy that we may spoil it, and, in order to put an end to the question, take it home with us, where we immediately see our error, and spend the rest of our lives in regretting that we did not finish it properly when we were about it. We can execute only a part; we see the whole of nature or of a picture at once. *Hinc illæ lachrymæ*. The English grasp at things whole—nothing less interests or contents them; and, in aiming at too much, they miss their object altogether.

A French artist, on the contrary, has none of this uneasy, anxious feeling—of this desire to master the whole of his subject, and anticipate his good fortune at a blow—of this *massing* and concentrating principle. He takes the thing more easy and rationally. He has none of the mental qualms, the nervous agitation, the wild, desperate plunges and convulsive throes of the English artist. He does not set off headlong without knowing where he is going, and find himself up to the neck in all sorts of difficulties and absurdities, from impatience to begin and have the matter off his mind (as if it were an evil conscience); but takes time to consider, arranges his plans, gets in his outline and his distances, and lays a foundation before he attempts a superstructure which he may have to pull in pieces again, or let it remain—a monument of his folly. *He looks before he leaps*, which is contrary to the true blindfold English rule; and I should think that we had invented this proverb from seeing so many fatal examples of the violation of it. Suppose he undertakes to make a copy of a picture: he first looks at it, and sees what it is. He does not make his sketch all black or all white, because one part of it is so, and because he cannot alter an idea he has once got into his head and must always run into extremes, but varies his tints (strange as it may seem) from green to red, from orange-tawney to yellow, from grey to brown, according as they vary in the original. He sees no inconsistency, no forfeiture of a principle, in this (any more than Mr. Southey in the change of the colours of his coat), but a great deal of



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right reason, and indeed an absolute necessity for it, if he wishes to succeed in what he is about. This is the last thing in an Englishman's thoughts; he only wishes to have his own way, though it ends in defeat and ruin—strives hard to do what he is sensible he cannot—or, if he finds he can, gives over and leaves the matter short of a triumphant conclusion, which is too flattering an idea for him to indulge in. The French artist proceeds with due deliberation, and bit by bit. He takes some one part—a hand, an eye, a piece of drapery, an object in the background—and finishes it carefully; then another, and so on to the end. When he has gone through every part, his picture is done: there is nothing more that he can add to it; it is a numerical calculation, and there are only so many items in the account. An Englishman may go on *slobbering* his over for the hundredth time, and be no nearer than when he began. As he tries to finish the whole at once, and as this is not possible, he always leaves his work in an imperfect state, or as if he had begun on a new canvas—like a man who is determined to leap to the top of a tower, instead of scaling it step by step, and who is necessarily thrown on his back every time he repeats the experiment. Again, the French student does not, from a childish impatience, when he is near the end, destroy the effect of the whole, by leaving some one part eminently deficient, an eye-sore to the rest; nor does he fly from what he is about, to any thing else that happens to catch his eye, neglecting the one and spoiling the other. He is, in our old poet's phrase, 'constrained by mastery,' by the mastery of common sense and pleasurable feeling. He is in no hurry to get to the end; for he has a satisfaction in the work, and touches and retouches perhaps a single head, day after day and week after week, without repining, uneasiness, or apparent progress. The very lightness and buoyancy of his feeling renders him (where the necessity of this is pointed out) patient and laborious. An Englishman, whatever he undertakes, is as if he was carrying a heavy load that oppresses both his body and mind, and that he is anxious to throw down as soon as possible. The Frenchman's hopes and fears are not excited to a pitch of intolerable agony, so that he is compelled, in mere compassion to himself, to bring the question to a speedy issue, even to the loss of his object. He is calm, easy, collected, and takes his time and improves his advantages as they occur, with vigilance and alacrity. Pleased with himself, he is pleased with whatever occupies his attention nearly alike. He is never taken at a disadvantage. Whether he paints an angel or a joint-stool, it is much the same to him: whether it is landscape or history, still it is he who paints it. Nothing puts him out of his way, for nothing puts him out of conceit with himself.

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This self-complacency forms an admirable groundwork for moderation and docility in certain particulars, though not in others.

I remember an absurd instance enough of this deliberate mode of setting to work in a young French artist, who was copying the Titian's *Mistress* in the Louvre, some twenty years ago. After getting in his chalk-outline, one would think he might have been attracted to the face—that heaven of beauty (as it appears to some), clear, transparent, open, breathing freshness, that ‘makes a sunshine in the shady place’; or to the lustre of the golden hair; or some part of the poetry of the picture (for, with all its materiality, this picture has a poetry about it); instead of which he began to finish a square he had marked out in the right-hand corner of the picture, containing a piece of board and a bottle of some kind of ointment. He set to work like a cabinet-maker or an engraver, and appeared to have no sympathy with the soul of the picture. On a Frenchman (generally speaking), the distinction between the great and the little, the exquisite and the indifferent, is in a great measure lost: his self-satisfied egotism supplies whatever is wanting up to a certain point, and neutralises whatever goes beyond it. Another young man, at the time I speak of, was for eleven weeks daily employed in making a black-lead pencil drawing of a small Leonardo: he sat with his legs balanced across a rail to do it, kept his hat on, every now and then consulted with his friends about his progress, rose up, went to the fire to warm himself, talked of the styles of the different masters—praising Titian *pour les coloris*, Raphael *pour l'expression*, Poussin *pour la composition*—all being alike to him, provided they had each something to help him on in his harangue (for that was all he thought about),—and then returned to *perfectionate* (as he called it) his copy. This would drive an Englishman out of his senses, supposing him to be ever so stupid. The perseverance and the interruptions, the labour without impulse, the attention to the parts in succession, and disregard of the whole together, are to him utterly incomprehensible. He wants to do something striking, and bends all his thoughts and energies to one mighty effort. A Frenchman has no notion of this summary proceeding, exists mostly in his present sensations, and, if he is left at liberty to enjoy or trifle with these, cares about nothing farther, looking neither backwards nor forwards. They forgot the reign of terror under Robespierre in a month; they forgot that they had ever been called the *great nation* under Buonaparte in a week. They sat in chairs on the Boulevards (just as they do at other times), when the shots were firing into the next street, and were only persuaded to quit them when their own soldiers were seen pouring down all the avenues from the heights of Montmartre, crying, ‘*Sauve qui peut !*’

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They then went home and dressed themselves to see the *Allies* enter Paris, as a fine sight, just as they would witness a procession at a theatre. This is carrying the instinct of levity as far as it will go. With all their affectation and want of sincerity, there is, on the principle here stated, a kind of simplicity and nature about them after all. They lend themselves to the impression of the moment with good humour and good will, making it not much better nor worse than it is: the English constantly over-do or under-do every thing, and are either mad with enthusiasm or in despair. The extreme slowness and regularity of the French school have then arisen, as a natural consequence, out of their very fickleness and frivolity (their severally supposed national characteristics); for, owing to the last, their studious exactness costs them nothing; and, again, they have no headstrong impulses or ardent longings that urge them on to the violation of rules, or hurry them away with a subject or with the interest belonging to it. All is foreseen and settled before-hand, so as to assist the fluttering and feeble hold they have of things. When they venture beyond the literal and formal, and (mistaking pedantry and bombast for genius) attempt the grand and the impressive style, as in David's and Girodet's pictures, the Lord deliver us from sublimity engrafted on insipidity and *petit-maitre-ism*! You see a solitary French artist in the Louvre copying a Raphael or a Rubens, standing on one leg, not quite sure of what he is about: you see them collected in groups about David's, elbowing each other, thinking them even finer than Raphael, more truly themselves, a more perfect combination of all that can be taught by the Greek sculptor and the French posture-master! Is this patriotism, or want of taste? If the former, it is excusable, and why not, if the latter?

Even should a French artist fail, he is not disconcerted—there is something else he excels in: 'for one unkind and cruel fair, another still consoles him.' He studies in a more graceful posture, or pays greater attention to his dress; or he has a friend, who has *beaucoup du talent*, and conceit enough for them both. His self-love has always a salvo, and comes upon its legs again, like a cat or a monkey. Not so with Bruin the Bear. If an Englishman (God help the mark!) fails in one thing, it is all over with him; he is enraged at the mention of any thing else he can do, and at every consolation offered him on that score; he banishes all other thoughts, but of his disappointment and discomfiture, from his breast—neither eats nor sleeps (it is well if he does not swallow down double 'potations, pottle-deep,' to drown remembrance)—will not own, even to himself, any other thing in which he takes an interest or feels a pride; and is in the horrors till he recovers his good

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opinion of himself in the only point on which he now sets a value, and for which his anxiety and disorder of mind incapacitate him as effectually as if he were drunk with strong liquor instead of spleen and passion. I have here drawn the character of an Englishman, I am sure; for it is a portrait of myself, and, I am sorry to add, an unexaggerated one. I intend these Essays as studies of human nature; and as, in the prosecution of this design, I do not spare others, I see no reason why I should spare myself. I lately tried to make a copy of a portrait by Titian (after several years' want of practice), with a view to give a friend in England some notion of the picture, which is equally remarkable and fine. I failed, and floundered on for some days, as might be expected. I must say the effect on me was painful and excessive. My sky was suddenly overcast. Every thing seemed of the colour of the paints I used. Nature in my eyes became dark and gloomy. I had no sense or feeling left, but of the unforeseen want of power, and of the tormenting struggle to do what I could not. I was ashamed ever to have written or spoken on art: it seemed a piece of vanity and affectation in me to do so—all whose reasonings and refinements on the subject ended in an execrable daub. Why did I think of attempting such a thing without weighing the consequences of exposing my presumption and incapacity so unnecessarily? It was blotting from my mind, covering with a thick veil all that I remembered of these pictures formerly—my hopes when young, my regrets since, one of the few consolations of my life and of my declining years. I was even afraid to walk out of an evening by the barrier of Neuilly, or to recal the yearnings and associations that once hung upon the beatings of my heart. All was turned to bitterness and gall. To feel any thing but the consciousness of my own helplessness and folly, appeared a want of sincerity, a mockery, and an insult to my mortified pride! The only relief I had was in the excess of pain I felt: this was at least some distinction. I was not insensible on that side. No French artist, I thought, would regret *not* copying a Titian so much as I did, nor so far shew the same value for it, however he might have the advantage of me in drawing or mechanical dexterity. Besides, I had copied this very picture very well formerly. If ever I got out of my present scrape, I had at any rate received a lesson not to run the same risk of vexation, or commit myself gratuitously again upon any occasion whatever. Oh! happy ought they to be, I said, who can do any thing, when I feel the misery, the agony, the dull, gnawing pain of being unable to do what I wish in this single instance! When I copied this picture before, I had no other resource, no other language. My tongue then stuck to the roof of my mouth: now it is unlocked, and I have

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done what I then despaired of doing in another way. Ought I not to be grateful and contented? Oh, yes!—and think how many there are who have nothing to which they can turn themselves, and fail in every object they undertake. Well, then, *Let bygones be bygones* (as the Scotch proverb has it); give up the attempt, and think no more of Titian, or of the portrait of a Man in black in the Louvre. This would be very well for any one else; but for me, who had nearly exhausted the subject on paper, that I should take it into my head to paint a libel of what I had composed so many and such fine panegyrics upon—it was a fatality, a judgment upon me for my vapouring and conceit. I must be as shy of the subject for the future as a damned author is of the title of his play or the name of his hero ever after. Yet the picture would look the same as ever. I could hardly bear to think so: it would be hid or defaced to me as ‘in a phantasma or a hideous dream.’ I must turn my thoughts from it, or they would lead to madness! The copy went on better afterwards, and the affair ended less tragically than I apprehended. I did not cut a hole in the canvas, or commit any other extravagance: it is now hanging up very quietly facing me; and I have considerable satisfaction in occasionally looking at it, as I write this paragraph.

Such are the agonies into which we throw ourselves about trifles—our rage and disappointment at want of success in any favourite pursuit, and our neglect of the means to ensure it. A Frenchman, under the penalty of half the chagrin at failure, would take just twice the pains and consideration to avoid it: but our morbid eagerness and blundering impetuosity, together with a certain *concreteness* of imagination which prevents our dividing any operation into steps and stages, defeat the very end we have in view. The worst of these wilful mischiefs of our own making is, that they admit of no relief or intermission. Natural calamities or great griefs, as we do not bring them upon ourselves, so they find a seasonable respite in tears or resignation, or in some alleviating contrast or reflection: but pride scorns all alliance with natural frailty or indulgence; our wilful purposes regard every relaxation or moment’s ease as a compromise of their very essence, which consists in violence and effort; they turn away from whatever might afford diversion or solace, and goad us on to exertions as painful as they are unavailable, and with no other companion than remorse,—the most intolerable of all inmates of the breast; for it is constantly urging us to retrieve our peace of mind by an impossibility—the undoing of what is past. One of the chief traits of sublimity in Milton’s character of Satan is this dreadful display of unrelenting pride and self-will—the sense of suffering joined with the sense of power and ‘courage never to submit or yield’—and the aggravation

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of the original purpose of lofty ambition and opposition to the Almighty, with the total overthrow and signal punishment,—which ought to be reasons for its relinquishment. ‘His thoughts burn like a hell within him!’ but he gives them ‘neither truce nor rest,’ and will not even sue for mercy. This kind of sublimity must be thrown away upon the French critic, who would only think Satan a very ridiculous old gentleman for adhering so obstinately to his original pretensions, and not making the most of circumstances, and giving in his resignation to the ruling party! When Buonaparte fell, an English editor (of virulent memory) exhausted a great number of the finest passages in *Paradise Lost*, in applying them to his ill-fated ambition. This was an equal compliment to the poet and the conqueror: to the last, for having realised a conception of himself in the mind of his enemies on a par with the most stupendous creations of imagination; to the first, for having embodied in fiction what bore so strong a resemblance to, and was constantly brought to mind by, the fearful and imposing reality! But to return to our subject.

It is the same with us in love and literature. An Englishman makes love without thinking of the chances of success, his own disadvantages, or the character of his mistress—that is, without the adaptation of means to ends, consulting only his own humour or fancy;<sup>1</sup> and he writes a book of history or travels, without acquainting himself with geography, or appealing to documents or dates; substituting his own will or opinion in the room of these technical helps or hindrances, as he considers them. It is not right. In business it is not by any means the same; which looks as if, where interest was the moving principle, and acted as a counterpoise to caprice and will, our headstrong propensity gave way, though it sometimes leads us into extravagant and ruinous speculations. Nor is it a disadvantage to us in war; for there the spirit of contradiction does every thing, and an Englishman will go to the devil sooner than yield to any odds. Courage is nothing but will, defying consequences; and this the English have in per-

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Johnson has observed, that ‘strong passion deprives the lover of that easiness of address, which is so great a recommendation to most women.’ Is then indifference or coldness the surest passport to the female heart? A man who is much in love has not his wits properly about him: he can think only of her whose image is engraven on his heart; he can talk only of her; he can only repeat the same vows, and protestations, and expressions of rapture or despair. He may, by this means, become importunate and troublesome—but does he deserve to lose his mistress for the only cause that gives him a title to her—the sincerity of his passion? We may perhaps answer this question by another—Is a woman to accept of a madman, merely because he happens to fall in love with her? ‘The lunatic, the lover and the poet,’ as Shakespear has said, ‘are of imagination all compact,’ and must, in most cases, be contented with imagination as their reward. Realities are out of their reach, as well as beneath their notice.

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fection. Burns somewhere calls out lustily, inspired by rhyme and *usquebaugh*,—

‘Set but a Scotsman on a hill;  
Say such is royal George’s will,  
And there’s the foe :—  
His only thought is how to kill  
Twa at a blow.’

I apprehend, with his own countrymen or ours, all the love and loyalty would come to little, but for their hatred of the army opposed to them. It is the resistance, ‘the two to kill at a blow,’ that is the charm, and makes our fingers’-ends tingle. The Greek cause makes no progress with us for this reason : it is one of pure sympathy, but our sympathies must arise out of our antipathies ; they were devoted to the Queen to spite the King. We had a wonderful affection for the Spaniards—the secret of which was that we detested the French. Our love must begin with hate. It is so far well that the French are opposed to us in almost every way ; for the spirit of contradiction alone to foreign fopperies and absurdities keeps us within some bounds of decency and order. When an English lady of quality introduces a favourite by saying, ‘This is his lordship’s physician, and my atheist,’ the humour might become epidemic ; but we can stop it at once by saying, ‘That is so like a Frenchwoman !’—The English excel in the practical and mechanic arts, where mere plodding and industry are expected and required ; but they do not combine business and pleasure well together. Thus, in the Fine Arts, which unite the mechanical with the sentimental, they will probably never succeed ; for the one spoils and diverts them from the other. An Englishman can attend but to one thing at a time. He hates music at dinner. He can go through any labour or pain with prodigious fortitude ; but he cannot make a pleasure of it, or persuade himself he is doing a *fine thing*, when he is not. Again, they are great in original discoveries, which come upon them by surprise, and which they leave to others to perfect. It is a question whether, if they foresaw they were about to make the discovery, at the very point of projection as it were, they would not turn their backs upon it, and leave it to shift for itself ; or obstinately refuse to take the last step, or give up the pursuit, in mere dread and nervous apprehension lest they should not succeed. Poetry is also their undeniable element ; for the essence of poetry is will and passion, ‘and it alone is high fantastical.’ French poetry is *verbiage* or dry detail.

I have thus endeavoured to shew why it is the English fail as a people in the Fine Arts, because the idea of the end absorbs that of the means. Hogarth was an exception to this rule ; but then every stroke

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of his pencil was instinct with genius. As it has been well said, that 'we *read* his works,' so it might be said he *wrote* them. Barry is an instance more to my purpose. No one could argue better about *gusto* in painting, and yet no one ever painted with less. His pictures were dry, coarse, and wanted all that his descriptions of those of others indicate. For example, he speaks of 'the dull, dead, watery look' of the Medusa's head of Leonardo, in a manner that conveys an absolute idea of the character: had he copied it, you would never have suspected any thing of the kind. His pen grows almost wanton in praise of Titian's nymph-like figures. What *drabs* he has made of his own sea-nymphs, floating in the Thames, with Dr. Burney at their head, with his wig on! He is like a person admiring the grace of an accomplished rope-dancer; place him on the rope himself, and his head turns;—or he is like Luther's comparison of Reason to a drunken man on horseback—'set him up on one side, and he tumbles over on the other.' Why is this? His mind was essentially ardent and discursive, not sensitive or observant; and though the immediate object acted as a stimulus to his imagination, it was only as it does to the poet's—that is, as a link in the chain of association, as implying other strong feelings and ideas, and not for its intrinsic beauty or individual details. He had not the painter's eye, though he had the painter's general knowledge. There is as great a difference in this respect between our views of things as between the telescope and microscope. People in general see objects only to distinguish them in practice and by name—to know that a hat is black, that a chair is not a table, that John is not James; and there are painters, particularly of history in England, who look very little farther. They cannot finish any thing, or go over a head twice: the first *coup-d'œil* is all they ever arrive at, nor can they refine on their impressions, soften them down, or reduce them to their component parts, without losing their spirit. The inevitable result of this is grossness, and also want of force and solidity; for, in reality, the parts cannot be separated without injury from the whole. Such people have no pleasure in the art as such: it is merely to astonish or to thrive that they follow it; or, if thrown out of it by accident, they regret it only as a bankrupt tradesman does a business which was a handsome subsistence to him. Barry did not live, like Titian, on the taste of colours (there is here, perhaps—and I will not disguise it—in English painters in general, a defect of organic susceptibility); they were not a *pabulum* to his senses; he did not hold green, blue, red, and yellow for 'the darlings of his precious eye.' They did not, therefore, sink into his mind with all their hidden harmonies, nor nourish and enrich it with material beauty, though he knew enough of them to furnish hints for other ideas and



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to suggest topics of discourse. If he had had the most enchanting object in nature before him in his painting-room at the Adelphi, he would have turned from it, after a moment's burst of admiration, to talk of the subject of his next composition, and to scrawl in some new and vast design, illustrating a series of great events in history, or some vague moral theory. The art itself was nothing to him, though he made it the stalking-horse to his ambition and display of intellectual power in general; and, therefore, he neglected its essential qualities to daub in huge allegories, or carry on cabals with the Academy, in which the violence of his will and the extent of his views found proper food and scope. As a painter, he was tolerable merely as a draftsman, or in that part of the art which may be best reduced to rules and precepts, or to positive measurements. There is neither colouring, nor expression, nor delicacy, nor striking effect in his pictures at the Adelphi. The group of youths and horses, in the representation of the Olympic Games, is the best part of them, and has more of the grace and spirit of a Greek bas-relief than any thing of the same kind in the French school of painting. Barry was, all his life, a thorn in the side of Sir Joshua, who was irritated by the temper and disconcerted by the powers of the man; and who, conscious of his own superiority in the exercise of his profession, yet looked askance at Barry's loftier pretensions and more gigantic scale of art. But he had no more occasion to be really jealous of him than of an Irish porter or orator. It was like Imogen's mistaking the dead body of Cloten for her lord's—'the jovial thigh, the brawns of Hercules': the head, which would have detected the cheat, was missing!

I might have gone more into the subject of our apparent indifference to the pleasure of mere imitation, if I had had to run a parallel between English and Italian or even Flemish art; but really, though I find a great deal of what is finical, I find nothing of the pleasurable in the details of French more than of English art. The English artist, it is an old and just complaint, can with difficulty be prevailed upon to finish any part of a picture but the face, even if he does that any tolerable justice: the French artist bestows equal and elaborate pains on every part of his picture—the dress, the carpet, &c.; and it has been objected to the latter method, that it has the effect of making the face look unfinished; for as this is variable and in motion, it can never admit of the same minuteness of imitation as objects of *still life*, and must suffer in the comparison, if these have the utmost possible degree of attention bestowed on them, and do not fall into their relative place in the composition from their natural insignificance. But does not this distinction shew generally that the English have no pleasure in art, unless there is an additional interest

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beyond what is borrowed from the eye, and that the French have the same pleasure in it, provided the mechanical operation is the same—like the fly that settles equally on the face or dress, and runs over the whole surface with the same lightness and indifference? The collar of a coat is out of drawing: this may be and is wrong. But I cannot say that it gives me the same disturbance as if the nose was awry. A Frenchman thinks that both are equally out of drawing, and sets about correcting them both with equal gravity and perseverance. A part of the back-ground of a picture is left in an unfinished state: this is a sad eye-sore to the French artist or connoisseur. We English care little about it: if the head and character are well given, we pass it over as of small consequence; and if they are failures, it is of even less. A French painter, after having made you look like a baboon, would go on finishing the cravat or the buttons of your coat with all the nicety of a man milliner or button-maker, and the most perfect satisfaction with himself and his art. This with us would be quite impossible. 'They are careful after many things: with us, there is one thing needful'—which is, effect. We certainly throw our impressions more into masses (they are not taken off by pattern, every part alike): there may be a slowness and repugnance at first; but, afterwards, there is an impulse, a *momentum* acquired—one interest absorbing and being strengthened by several others; and if we gain our principal object, we can overlook the rest, or at least cannot find time to attend to them till we have secured this. We have nothing of the *petit-maitre*, of the *martinet* style about us: we run into the opposite fault. If we had time, if we had power, there could be no objection to giving every part with the utmost perfection, as it is given in a looking-glass. But if we have only a month to do a portrait in, is it not better to give three weeks to the face and one to the dress, than one week to the face and three to the dress? How often do we look at the face compared to the dress? 'On a good foundation,' says Sancho Panza, 'a good house may be built'; so a good picture should have a good back-ground, and be finished in every part. It is entitled to this mark of respect, which is like providing a frame for it, and hanging it in a good light. I can easily understand how Rubens or Vandyke finished the back-grounds and drapery of their pictures—they were worth the trouble; and, besides, it cost them nothing. It was to them no more than blowing a bubble in the air. One would no doubt have every thing right—a feather in a cap, or a plant in the fore-ground—if a thought or a touch would do it. But to labour on for ever, and labour to no purpose, is beyond mortal or English patience. Our clumsiness is one cause of our negligence. Depend upon it, people do with readiness what they can do well. I

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rather wonder, therefore, that Raphael took such pains in finishing his draperies and back-grounds, which he did so indifferently. The expression is like an emanation of the soul, or like a lamp shining within and illuminating the whole face and body; and every part, charged with so sacred a trust as the conveying of this expression (even to the hands and feet), would be wrought up to the highest perfection. But his inanimate objects must have cost him some trouble; and yet he laboured them too. In what he could not do well, he was still determined to do his best; and that nothing should be wanting in decorum and respect to an art that he had consecrated to virtue, and to that genius that burnt like a flame upon its altars! We have nothing that for myself I can compare with this high and heroic pursuit of art for its own sake. The French fancy their own pedantic abortions equal to it, thrust them into the Louvre, 'and with their darkness dare affront that light!'—thus proving themselves without the germ or the possibility of excellence—the feeling of it in others. We at least claim some interest in art, by looking up to its loftiest monuments—retire to a distance, and reverence the sanctuary, if we cannot enter it.

'They also serve who only stare and wait.'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Zoffani, a foreign artist, but who, by long residence in England, had got our habits of indolence and dilatoriness, was employed by the late King, who was fond of low comedy, to paint a scene for Reynolds's *Speculation*; in which Quick, Munden, and Miss Wallis were introduced. The King called to see it in its progress; and at last it was done—'*all but the coat.*' The picture, however, was not sent; and the King repeated his visit to the artist. Zoffani with some embarrassment said, 'It was done all but the *goat.*'—'Don't tell me,' said the impatient monarch; 'this is always the way: you said it was done all but the coat the last time I was here.'—'I said the *goat*, and please your Majesty.'—'Aye,' replied the King, 'the *goat* or the *coat*, I care not which you call it; I say I will not have the picture,'—and was going to leave the room, when Zoffani, in an agony, repeated, 'It is the *goat* that is not finished,'—pointing to a picture of a goat that was hung up in a frame as an ornament to the scene at the theatre. The King laughed heartily at the blunder, and waited patiently till the goat was finished. Zoffani, like other idle people, was careless and extravagant. He made a fortune when he first came over here, which he soon spent: he then went out to India, where he made another, with which he returned to England, and spent also. He was an excellent theatrical portrait-painter, and has left delineations of celebrated actors and interesting situations, which revive the dead, and bring the scene before us.

## ON DISAGREEABLE PEOPLE

### ESSAY XXI

#### ON DISAGREEABLE PEOPLE

THOSE people who are uncomfortable in themselves are disagreeable to others. I do not here mean to speak of persons who offend intentionally, or are obnoxious to dislike from some palpable defect of mind or body, ugliness, pride, ill-humour, &c.,—but of those who are disagreeable in spite of themselves, and, as it might appear, with almost every qualification to recommend them to others. This want of success is owing chiefly to something in what is called their *manner*; and this again has its foundation in a certain cross-grained and unsociable state of feeling on their part, which influences us, perhaps, without our distinctly adverting to it. The mind is a finer instrument than we sometimes suppose it, and is not only swayed by overt acts and tangible proofs, but has an instinctive feeling of the air of truth. We find many individuals in whose company we pass our time, and have no particular fault to find with their understandings or character, and yet we are never thoroughly satisfied with them: the reason will turn out to be, upon examination, that they are never thoroughly satisfied with themselves, but uneasy and out of sorts all the time; and this makes us uneasy with them, without our reflecting on, or being able to discover the cause.

Thus, for instance, we meet with persons who do us a number of kindnesses, who shew us every mark of respect and good-will, who are friendly and serviceable,—and yet we do not feel grateful to them, after all. We reproach ourselves with this as caprice or insensibility, and try to get the better of it; but there is something in their way of doing things that prevents us from feeling cordial or sincerely obliged to them. We think them very worthy people, and would be glad of an opportunity to do them a good turn if it were in our power; but we cannot get beyond this: the utmost we can do is to save appearances, and not come to an open rupture with them. The truth is, in all such cases, we do not sympathise (as we ought) with them, because they do not sympathise (as they ought) with us. They have done what they did from a sense of duty in a cold dry manner, or from a meddlesome busybody humour; or to shew their superiority over us, or to patronise our infirmity; or they have dropped some hint by the way, or blundered upon some topic they should not, and have shewn, by one means or other, that they were occupied with any thing but the pleasure they were affording us, or a

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delicate attention to our feelings. Such persons may be styled *friendly grievances*. They are commonly people of low spirits and disappointed views, who see the discouraging side of human life, and, with the best intentions in the world, contrive to make every thing they have to do with uncomfortable. They are alive to your distress, and take pains to remove it; but they have no satisfaction in the gaiety and ease they have communicated, and are on the *look-out* for some new occasion of signalling their zeal; nor are they backward to insinuate that you will soon have need of their assistance, to guard you against running into fresh difficulties, or to extricate you from them. From large benevolence of soul and 'discourse of reason, looking before and after,' they are continually reminding you of something that has gone wrong in time past, or that may do so in that which is to come, and are surprised that their awkward hints, sly innuendos, blunt questions, and solemn features do not excite all the complacency and mutual good understanding in you which it is intended that they should. When they make themselves miserable on your account, it is hard that you will not lend them your countenance and support. This deplorable humour of theirs does not hit any one else. They are useful, but not agreeable people; they may assist you in your affairs, but they depress and tyrannise over your feelings. When they have made you happy, they will not let you be so—have no enjoyment of the good they have done—will on no account part with their melancholy and desponding tone—and, by their mawkish insensibility and doleful grimaces, throw a damp over the triumph they are called upon to celebrate. They would keep you in hot water, that they may help you out of it. They will nurse you in a fit of sickness (congenial sufferers!)—arbitrate a law-suit for you, and embroil you deeper—procure you a loan of money;—but all the while they are only delighted with rubbing the sore place, and casting the colour of your mental or other disorders. 'The whole need not a physician;' and, being once placed at ease and comfort, they have no farther use for you as subjects for their singular beneficence, and you are not sorry to be quit of their tiresome interference. The old proverb, *A friend in need is a friend indeed*, is not verified in them. The class of persons here spoken of are the very reverse of *summer-friends*, who court you in prosperity, flatter your vanity, are the humble servants of your follies, never see or allude to any thing wrong, minister to your gaiety, smooth over every difficulty, and, with the slightest approach of misfortune or of any thing unpleasant, take French leave:—

'As when, in prime of June, a burnished fly,  
Sprung from the meads, o'er which he sweeps along,  
Cheered by the breathing bloom and vital sky,

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Tunes up amid these airy halls his song,  
Soothing at first the gay reposing throng;  
And oft he sips their bowl, or nearly drowned,  
He thence recovering drives their beds among,  
And scares their tender sleep with trump profound;  
Then out again he tries to wing his mazy round.'

THOMSON'S CASTLE OF INDOLENCE.

However, we may despise such triflers, yet we regret them more than those well-meaning friends on whom a dull melancholy vapour hangs, that drags them and every one about them to the ground.

Again, there are those who might be very agreeable people, if they had but spirit to be so; but there is a narrow, unaspiring, under-bred tone in all they say or do. They have great sense and information—abound in a knowledge of character—have a fund of anecdote—are unexceptionable in manners and appearance—and yet we cannot make up our minds to like them: we are not glad to see them, nor sorry when they go away. Our familiarity with them, however great, wants the principle of cement, which is a certain appearance of frank cordiality and social enjoyment. They have no pleasure in the subjects of their own thoughts, and therefore can communicate none to others. There is a dry, husky, grating manner—a pettiness of detail—a tenaciousness of particulars, however trifling or unpleasant—a disposition to cavil—an aversion to enlarged and liberal views of things—in short, a hard, painful, unbending *matter-of-factness*, from which the spirit and effect are banished, and the letter only is attended to, which makes it impossible to sympathise with their discourse. To make conversation interesting or agreeable, there is required either the habitual tone of good company, which gives a favourable colouring to every thing—or the warmth and enthusiasm of genius, which, though it may occasionally offend or be thrown off its guard, makes amends by its rapturous flights, and flings a glancing light upon all things. The literal and *dogged* style of conversation resembles that of a French picture, or its mechanical fidelity is like evidence given in a court of justice, or a police report.

From the literal to the plain-spoken, the transition is easy. The most efficient weapon of offence is truth. Those who deal in dry and repulsive matters-of-fact, tire out their friends; those who blurt out hard and home truths, make themselves mortal enemies wherever they come. There are your blunt, honest creatures, who omit no opportunity of letting you know their minds, and are sure to tell you all the ill, and conceal all the good they hear of you. They would not flatter you for the world, and to caution you against the malice of others, they think the province of a friend. This is not candour, but impudence; and yet they think it odd you are not charmed with their

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unreserved communicativeness of disposition. Gossips and tale-bearers, on the contrary, who supply the *tittle-tattle* of the neighbourhood, flatter you to your face, and laugh at you behind your back, are welcome and agreeable guests in all companies. Though you know it will be your turn next, yet for the sake of the immediate gratification, you are contented to pay your share of the public tax upon character, and are better pleased with the falsehoods that never reach your ears, than with the truths that others (less complaisant and more sincere) utter to your face—so short-sighted and willing to be imposed upon is our self-love! There is a man, who has the air of not being convinced without an argument: you avoid him as if he were a lion in your path. There is another, who asks you fifty questions as to the commonest things you advance: you would sooner pardon a fellow who held a pistol to your breast and demanded your money. No one regards a turnpike-keeper, or a custom-house officer, with a friendly eye: he who stops you in an excursion of fancy, or ransacks the articles of your belief obstinately and churlishly, to distinguish the spurious from the genuine, is still more your foe. These inquisitors and cross-examiners upon system make ten enemies for every controversy in which they engage. The world dread nothing so much as being convinced of their errors. In doing them this piece of service, you make war equally on their prejudices, their interests, their pride, and indolence. You not only set up for a superiority of understanding over them, which they hate, but you deprive them of their ordinary grounds of action, their topics of discourse, of their confidence in themselves, and those to whom they have been accustomed to look up for instruction and advice. It is making children of them. You unhinge all their established opinions and trains of thought; and after leaving them in this listless, vacant, unsettled state—dissatisfied with their own notions and shocked at yours—you expect them to court and be delighted with your company, because, forsooth, you have only expressed your sincere and conscientious convictions. Mankind are not deceived by professions, unless they choose. They think that this pill of true doctrine, however it may be gilded over, is full of gall and bitterness to them; and, again, it is a maxim of which the vulgar are firmly persuaded, that plain-speaking (as it is called) is, nine parts in ten, spleen and self-opinion; and the other part, perhaps, honesty. Those who will not abate an inch in argument, and are always seeking to recover the wind of you, are, in the eye of the world, disagreeable, unconscionable people, who ought to be *sent to Coventry*, or left to wrangle by themselves. No persons, however, are more averse to contradiction than these same dogmatists. What shews our susceptibility on this

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point is, there is no flattery so adroit or effectual as that of implicit assent. Any one, however mean his capacity or ill-qualified to judge, who gives way to all our sentiments, and never seems to think but as we do, is indeed an *alter idem*—another self; and we admit him without scruple into our entire confidence, ‘yea, into our heart of hearts.’

It is the same in books. Those which, under the disguise of plain-speaking, vent paradoxes, and set their faces against the common-sense of mankind, are neither ‘the volumes

—That enrich the shops,  
That pass with approbation through the land;’

nor, I fear, can it be added—

‘That bring their authors an immortal fame.’

They excite a clamour and opposition at first, and are in general soon consigned to oblivion. Even if the opinions are in the end adopted, the authors gain little by it, and their names remain in their original obloquy; for the public will own no obligations to such ungracious benefactors. In like manner, there are many books written in a very delightful vein, though with little in them, and that are accordingly popular. Their principle is to please, and not to offend; and they succeed in both objects. We are contented with the deference shown to our feelings for the time, and grant a truce both to wit and wisdom. The ‘courteous reader’ and the good-natured author are well matched in this instance, and find their account in mutual tenderness and forbearance to each other’s infirmities. I am not sure that Walton’s *Angler* is not a book of this last description—

‘That dallies with the innocence of thought,  
Like the old age.’

Hobbes and Mandeville are in the opposite extreme, and have met with a correspondent fate. The *Tatler* and the *Spectator* are in the golden mean, carry instruction as far as it can go without shocking, and give the most exquisite pleasure without one particle of pain. ‘*Desire to please, and you will infallibly please,*’ is a maxim equally applicable to the study or the drawing-room. Thus also we see actors of very small pretensions, and who have scarce any other merit than that of being on good terms with themselves, and in high good humour with their parts (though they hardly understand a word of them), who are universal favourites with the audience. Others, who are masters of their art, and in whom no slip or flaw can be detected, you have no pleasure in seeing, from something dry,



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repulsive, and unconciliating in their manner ; and you almost hate the very mention of their names, as an unavailing appeal to your candid decision in their favour, and as taxing you with injustice for refusing it.

We may observe persons who seem to take a peculiar delight in the *disagreeable*. They catch all sorts of uncouth tones and gestures, the manners and dialect of clowns and hoydens, and aim at vulgarity as desperately as others ape gentility. (This is what is often understood by a *love of low life*.) They say the most unwarrantable things, without meaning or feeling what they say. What startles or shocks other people, is to them a sport—an amusing excitement—a fillip to their constitutions ; and from the bluntness of their perceptions, and a certain wilfulness of spirit, not being able to enter into the refined and agreeable, they make a merit of despising every thing of the kind. Masculine women, for example, are those who, not being distinguished by the charms and delicacy of the sex, affect a superiority over it by throwing aside all decorum. We also find another class, who continually do and say what they ought not, and what they do not intend, and who are governed almost entirely by an instinct of absurdity. Owing to a perversity of imagination or irritability of nerve, the idea that a thing is improper acts as a provocation to it : the fear of committing a blunder is so strong, that in their agitation they *bolt* out whatever is uppermost in their minds, before they are aware of the consequence. The dread of something wrong haunts and rivets their attention to it ; and an uneasy, morbid apprehensiveness of temper takes away their self-possession, and hurries them into the very mistakes they are most anxious to avoid.

If we look about us, and ask who are the agreeable and disagreeable people in the world, we shall see that it does not depend on their virtues or vices—their understanding or stupidity—but as much on the degree of pleasure or pain they seem to feel in ordinary social intercourse. What signify all the good qualities any one possesses, if he is none the better for them himself ? If the cause is so delightful, the effect ought to be so too. We enjoy a friend's society only in proportion as he is satisfied with ours. Even wit, however it may startle, is only agreeable as it is sheathed in good humour. There are a kind of *intellectual stammerers*, who are delivered of their good things with pain and effort ; and consequently what costs them such evident uneasiness does not impart unmixed delight to the bystanders. There are those, on the contrary, whose sallies cost them nothing—who abound in a flow of pleasantry and good-humour ; and we float down the stream with them carelessly and triumphantly,—

' Wit at the helm, and Pleasure at the prow.'

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Perhaps it may be said of English wit in general, that it too much resembles pointed lead : after all, there is something heavy and dull in it ! The race of small wits are not the least agreeable people in the world. They have their little joke to themselves, enjoy it, and do not set up any preposterous pretensions to thwart the current of our self-love. Toad-eating is accounted a thriving profession ; and a *butt*, according to the Spectator, is a highly useful member of society—as one who takes whatever is said of him in good part, and as necessary to conduct off the spleen and superfluous petulance of the company. Opposed to these are the swaggering bullies—the licensed wits—the free-thinkers—the loud talkers, who, in the jockey phrase, have *lost their mouths*, and cannot be reined in by any regard to decency or common-sense. The more obnoxious the subject, the more are they charmed with it, converting their want of feeling into a proof of superiority to vulgar prejudice and squeamish affectation. But there is an unseemly exposure of the mind, as well as of the body. There are some objects that shock the sense, and cannot with propriety be mentioned : there are naked truths that offend the mind, and ought to be kept out of sight as much as possible. For human nature cannot bear to be too hardly pressed upon. One of these cynical truisms, when brought forward to the world, may be forgiven as a slip of the pen : a succession of them, denoting a deliberate purpose and *malice prepense*, must ruin any writer. Lord Byron had got into an irregular course of these a little before his death—seemed desirous, in imitation of Mr. Shelley, to run the gauntlet of public obloquy—and, at the same time, wishing to screen himself from the censure he defied, dedicated his Cain to Sir Walter Scott—a pretty godfather to such a bantling !

Some persons are of so teasing and fidgetty a turn of mind, that they do not give you a moment's rest. Every thing goes wrong with them. They complain of a headache or the weather. They take up a book, and lay it down again—venture an opinion, and retract it before they have half done—offer to serve you, and prevent some one else from doing it. If you dine with them at a tavern, in order to be more at your ease, the fish is too little done—the sauce is not the right one ; they ask for a sort of wine which they think is not to be had, or if it is, after some trouble, procured, do not touch it ; they give the waiter fifty contradictory orders, and are restless and sit on thorns the whole of dinner-time. All this is owing to a want of robust health, and of a strong spirit of enjoyment ; it is a fastidious habit of mind, produced by a valetudinary habit of body : they are out of sorts with every thing, and of course their ill-humour and captiousness communicates itself to you, who are as little delighted

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with them as they are with other things. Another sort of people, equally objectionable with this helpless class, who are disconcerted by a shower of rain or stopped by an insect's wing, are those who, in the opposite spirit, will have every thing their own way, and carry all before them—who cannot brook the slightest shadow of opposition—who are always in the heat of an argument—who knit their brows and clench their teeth in some speculative discussion, as if they were engaged in a personal quarrel—and who, though successful over almost every competitor, seem still to resent the very offer of resistance to their supposed authority, and are as angry as if they had sustained some premeditated injury. There is an impatience of temper, and an intolerance of opinion in this that conciliates neither our affection nor esteem. To such persons nothing appears of any moment but the indulgence of a domineering intellectual superiority to the disregard and discomfiture of their own and every body else's comfort. Mounted on an abstract proposition, they trample on every courtesy and decency of behaviour; and though, perhaps, they do not intend the gross personalities they are guilty of, yet they cannot be acquitted of a want of due consideration for others, and of an intolerable egotism in the support of truth and justice. You may hear one of these Quixotic declaimers pleading the cause of humanity in a voice of thunder, or expatiating on the beauty of a Guido with features distorted with rage and scorn. This is not a very amiable or edifying spectacle.

There are persons who cannot make friends. Who are they? Those who cannot be friends. It is not the want of understanding or good-nature, of entertaining or useful qualities, that you complain of: on the contrary, they have probably many points of attraction; but they have one that neutralises all these—they care nothing about you, and are neither the better nor worse for what you think of them. They manifest no joy at your approach; and when you leave them, it is with a feeling that they can do just as well without you. This is not sullenness, nor indifference, nor absence of mind; but they are intent solely on their own thoughts, and you are merely one of the subjects they exercise them upon. They live in society as in a solitude; and however their brain works, their pulse beats neither faster nor slower for the common accidents of life. There is, therefore, something cold and repulsive in the air that is about them—like that of marble. In a word, they are *modern philosophers*; and the modern philosopher is what the pedant was of old—a being who lives in a world of his own, and has no correspondence with this. It is not that such persons have not done you services—you acknowledge it; it is not that they have said severe things of you—you submit to

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it as a necessary evil : but it is the cool manner in which the whole is done that annoys you—the speculating upon you, as if you were nobody—the regarding you, with a view to experiment *in corpore vili*—the principle of dissection—the determination to spare no blemishes—to cut you down to your real standard ;—in short, the utter absence of the partiality of friendship, the blind enthusiasm of affection, or the delicacy of common decency, that whether they ‘ hew you as a carcase fit for hounds, or carve you as a dish fit for the gods,’ the operation on your feelings and your sense of obligation is just the same ; and, whether they are demons or angels in themselves, you wish them equally *at the devil* !

Other persons of worth and sense give way to mere violence of temperament (with which the understanding has nothing to do)—are burnt up with a perpetual fury—repel and throw you to a distance by their restless, whirling motion—so that you dare not go near them, or feel as uneasy in their company as if you stood on the edge of a volcano. They have their *tempora mollia fandi* ; but then what a stir may you not expect the next moment ! Nothing is less inviting or less comfortable than this state of uncertainty and apprehension. Then there are those who never approach you without the most alarming advice or information, telling you that you are in a dying way, or that your affairs are on the point of ruin, by way of disburthening their consciences ; and others, who give you to understand much the same thing as a good joke, out of sheer impertinence, constitutional vivacity, and want of something to say. All these, it must be confessed, are disagreeable people ; and you repay their over-anxiety or total forgetfulness of you, by a determination to cut them as speedily as possible. We meet with instances of persons who overpower you by a sort of boisterous mirth and rude animal spirits, with whose ordinary state of excitement it is as impossible to keep up as with that of any one really intoxicated ; and with others who seem scarce alive—who take no pleasure or interest in any thing—who are born to exemplify the maxim,

‘ Not to admire is all the art I know

To make men happy, or to keep them so,’—

and whose mawkish insensibility or sullen scorn are equally annoying. In general, all people brought up in remote country places, where life is crude and harsh—all sectaries—all partisans of a losing cause, are discontented and disagreeable. Commend me above all to the Westminster School of Reform, whose blood runs as cold in their veins as the torpedo’s, and whose touch jars like it. Catholics are, upon the whole, more amiable than Protestants—foreigners than English people. Among ourselves, the Scotch, as a nation, are

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particularly disagreeable. They hate every appearance of comfort themselves, and refuse it to others. Their climate, their religion, and their habits are equally averse to pleasure. Their manners are either distinguished by a fawning sycophancy (to gain their own ends, and conceal their natural defects), that makes one sick; or by a morose unbending callousness, that makes one shudder. I had forgot to mention two other descriptions of persons who fall under the scope of this essay:—those who take up a subject, and run on with it interminably, without knowing whether their hearers care one word about it, or in the least minding what reception their oratory meets with—these are pretty generally voted *bored* (mostly German ones);—and others, who may be designated as practical paradox-mongers—who discard the ‘milk of human kindness,’ and an attention to common observances, from all their actions, as effeminate and puling—who wear a white hat as a mark of superior understanding, and carry home a handkerchief-full of mushrooms in the top of it as an original discovery—who give you craw-fish for supper instead of lobsters; seek their company in a garret, and over a gin-bottle, to avoid the imputation of affecting genteel society; and discard them after a term of years, and warn others against them, as being *honest fellows*, which is thought a vulgar prejudice. This is carrying the harsh and repulsive even beyond the disagreeable—to the hateful. Such persons are generally people of common-place understandings, obtuse feelings, and inordinate vanity. They are formidable if they get you in their power—otherwise, they are only to be laughed at.

There are a vast number who are disagreeable from meanness of spirit, from downright insolence, from slovenliness of dress or disgusting tricks, from folly or ignorance: but these causes are positive moral or physical defects, and I only meant to speak of that repulsiveness of manners which arises from want of tact and sympathy with others. So far of friendship: a word, if I durst, of love. Gallantry to women (the sure road to their favour) is nothing but the appearance of extreme devotion to all their wants and wishes—a delight in their satisfaction, and a confidence in yourself, as being able to contribute towards it. The slightest indifference with regard to them, or distrust of yourself, are equally fatal. The amiable is the voluptuous in looks, manner, or words. No face that exhibits this kind of expression—whether lively or serious, obvious or suppressed, will be thought ugly—no address, awkward—no lover who approaches every woman he meets as his mistress, will be unsuccessful. Diffidence and awkwardness are the two antidotes to love.

To please universally, we must be pleased with ourselves and others. There should be a tinge of the coxcomb, an oil of self-complacency,

## ON DISAGREEABLE PEOPLE

an anticipation of success—there should be no gloom, no moroseness, no shyness—in short, there should be very little of an Englishman, and a good deal of a Frenchman. But though, I believe, this is the receipt, we are none the nearer making use of it. It is impossible for those who are naturally disagreeable ever to become otherwise. This is some consolation, as it may save a world of useless pains and anxiety. ‘*Desire to please, and you will infallibly please,*’ is a true maxim; but it does not follow that it is in the power of all to practise it. A vain man, who thinks he is endeavouring to please, is only endeavouring to shine, and is still farther from the mark. An irritable man, who puts a check upon himself, only grows dull, and loses spirit to be any thing. Good temper and a happy spirit (which are the indispensable requisites) can no more be commanded than good health or good looks; and though the plain and sickly need not distort their features, and may abstain from success, this is all they can do. The utmost a disagreeable person can do is to hope to be less disagreeable than with care and study he might become, and to pass unnoticed in society. With this negative character he should be contented, and may build his fame and happiness on other things.

I will conclude with a character of men who neither please nor aspire to please anybody, and who can come in nowhere so properly as at the fag-end of an essay:—I mean that class of discontented but amusing persons, who are infatuated with their own ill success, and reduced to despair by a lucky turn in their favour. While all goes well, they are *like fish out of water*. They have no reliance on or sympathy with their good fortune, and look upon it as a momentary delusion. Let a doubt be thrown on the question, and they begin to be full of lively apprehensions again: let all their hopes vanish, and they feel themselves on firm ground once more. From want of spirit or of habit, their imaginations cannot rise above the low ground of humility—cannot reflect the gay, flaunting tints of the fancy—flag and droop into despondency—and can neither indulge the expectation, nor employ the means of success. Even when it is within their reach, they dare not lay hands upon it; and shrink from unlooked-for bursts of prosperity, as something of which they are both ashamed and unworthy. The class of *croakers* here spoken of are less delighted at other people’s misfortunes than their own. Their neighbours may have some pretensions—they have none. Querulous complaints and anticipations of discomfort are the food on which they live; and they at last acquire a passion for that which is the favourite theme of their thoughts, and can no more do without it than without the pinch of snuff with which they season their conversation, and enliven the pauses of their daily prognostics.

## UNCOLLECTED ESSAYS

### ESSAY XXII

#### ON A SUN-DIAL

‘To carve out dials quaintly, point by point.’

SHAKESPEAR.

*Horas non numero nisi serenas*—is the motto of a sun-dial near Venice. There is a softness and a harmony in the words and in the thought unparalleled. Of all conceits it is surely the most classical. ‘I count only the hours that are serene.’ What a bland and care-dispelling feeling! How the shadows seem to fade on the dial-plate as the sky lours, and time presents only a blank unless as its progress is marked by what is joyous, and all that is not happy sinks into oblivion! What a fine lesson is conveyed to the mind—to take no note of time but by its benefits, to watch only for the smiles and neglect the frowns of fate, to compose our lives of bright and gentle moments, turning always to the sunny side of things, and letting the rest slip from our imaginations, unheeded or forgotten! How different from the common art of self-tormenting! For myself, as I rode along the Brenta, while the sun shone hot upon its sluggish, slimy waves, my sensations were far from comfortable; but the reading this inscription on the side of a glaring wall in an instant restored me to myself; and still, whenever I think of or repeat it, it has the power of wafting me into the region of pure and blissful abstraction. I cannot help fancying it to be a legend of Popish superstition. Some monk of the dark ages must have invented and bequeathed it to us, who, loitering in trim gardens and watching the silent march of time, as his fruits ripened in the sun or his flowers scented the balmy air, felt a mild languor pervade his senses, and having little to do or to care for, determined (in imitation of his sun-dial) to efface that little from his thoughts or draw a veil over it, making of his life one long dream of quiet! *Horas non numero nisi serenas*—he might repeat, when the heavens were overcast and the gathering storm scattered the falling leaves, and turn to his books and wrap himself in his golden studies! Out of some such mood of mind, indolent, elegant, thoughtful, this exquisite device (speaking volumes) must have originated.

Of the several modes of counting time, that by the sun-dial is perhaps the most apposite and striking, if not the most convenient or comprehensive. It does not obtrude its observations, though it ‘morals on the time,’ and, by its stationary character, forms a

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contrast to the most fleeting of all essences. It stands *sub dio*—under the marble air, and there is some connexion between the image of infinity and eternity. I should also like to have a sunflower growing near it with bees fluttering round.<sup>1</sup> It should be of iron to denote duration, and have a dull, leaden look. I hate a sun-dial made of wood, which is rather calculated to show the variations of the seasons, than the progress of time, slow, silent, imperceptible, chequered with light and shade. If our hours were all serene, we might probably take almost as little note of them, as the dial does of those that are clouded. It is the shadow thrown across, that gives us warning of their flight. Otherwise, our impressions would take the same undistinguishable hue; we should scarce be conscious of our existence. Those who have had none of the cares of this life to harass and disturb them, have been obliged to have recourse to the hopes and fears of the next to enliven the prospect before them. Most of the methods for measuring the lapse of time have, I believe, been the contrivance of monks and religious recluses, who, finding time hang heavy on their hands, were at some pains to see how they got rid of it. The hour-glass is, I suspect, an older invention; and it is certainly the most defective of all. Its creeping sands are not indeed an unapt emblem of the minute, countless portions of our existence; and the manner in which they gradually slide through the hollow glass and diminish in number till not a single one is left, also illustrates the way in which our years slip from us by stealth: but as a mechanical invention, it is rather a hindrance than a help, for it requires to have the time, of which it pretends to count the precious moments, taken up in attention to itself, and in seeing that when one end of the glass is empty, we turn it round, in order that it may go on again, or else all our labour is lost, and we must wait for some other mode of ascertaining the time before we can recover our reckoning and proceed as before. The philosopher in his cell, the cottager at her spinning-wheel must, however, find an invaluable acquisition in this ‘companion of the lonely hour,’ as it has been called,<sup>2</sup> which not only serves to tell how the time goes, but to fill up its vacancies. What a treasure must not the little box seem to hold, as if it were a sacred deposit of the very grains and fleeting sands of life! What a business, in lieu of other more important avocations,

<sup>1</sup> Is this a verbal fallacy? Or in the close, retired, sheltered scene which I have imagined to myself, is not the sun-flower a natural accompaniment of the sun-dial?

<sup>2</sup> ‘Once more, companion of the lonely hour,  
I’ll turn thee up again.’

*Bloomfield’s Poems—The Widow to her Hour-glass.*



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to see it out to the last sand, and then to renew the process again on the instant, that there may not be the least flaw or error in the account ! What a strong sense must be brought home to the mind of the value and irrecoverable nature of the time that is fled ; what a thrilling, incessant consciousness of the slippery tenure by which we hold what remains of it ! Our very existence must seem crumbling to atoms, and running down (without a miraculous reprieve) to the last fragment. 'Dust to dust and ashes to ashes' is a text that might be fairly inscribed on an hour-glass : it is ordinarily associated with the scythe of Time and a Death's-head, as a *Memento mori* ; and has, no doubt, furnished many a tacit hint to the apprehensive and visionary enthusiast in favour of a resurrection to another life !

The French give a different turn to things, less *sombre* and less edifying. A common and also a very pleasing ornament to a clock, in Paris, is a figure of Time seated in a boat which Cupid is rowing along, with the motto, *L'Amour fait passer le Temps*—which the wits again have travestied into *Le Temps fait passer L'Amour*. All this is ingenious and well ; but it wants sentiment. I like a people who have something that they love and something that they hate, and with whom every thing is not alike a matter of indifference or *pour passer le temps*. The French attach no importance to any thing, except for the moment ; they are only thinking how they shall get rid of one sensation for another ; all their ideas are *in transitu*. Every thing is detached, nothing is accumulated. It would be a million of years before a Frenchman would think of the *Horas non numero nisi serenas*. Its impassioned repose and *ideal* voluptuousness are as far from their breasts as the poetry of that line in Shakespear—'How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon that bank !' They never arrive at the classical—or the romantic. They blow the bubbles of vanity, fashion, and pleasure ; but they do not expand their perceptions into refinement, or strengthen them into solidity. Where there is nothing fine in the ground-work of the imagination, nothing fine in the superstructure can be produced. They are light, airy, fanciful (to give them their due)—but when they attempt to be serious (beyond mere good sense) they are either dull or extravagant. When the volatile salt has flown off, nothing but a *caput mortuum* remains. They have infinite crotchets and caprices with their clocks and watches, which seem made for any thing but to tell the hour—gold-repeaters, watches with metal covers, clocks with hands to count the seconds. There is no escaping from quackery and impertinence, even in our attempts to calculate the waste of time. The years gallop fast enough for me, without remarking every moment as it flies ; and farther, I must say I dislike a watch (whether of French or English manufacture) that

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comes to me like a footpad with its face muffled, and does not present its clear, open aspect like a friend, and point with its finger to the time of day. All this opening and shutting of dull, heavy cases (under pretence that the glass-lid is liable to be broken, or lets in the dust or air and obstructs the movement of the watch) is not to husband time, but to give trouble. It is mere pomposity and self-importance, like consulting a mysterious oracle that one carries about with one in one's pocket, instead of asking a common question of an acquaintance or companion. There are two clocks which strike the hour in the room where I am. This I do not like. In the first place, I do not want to be reminded twice how the time goes (it is like the second tap of a saucy servant at your door when perhaps you have no wish to get up): in the next place, it is starting a difference of opinion on the subject, and I am averse to every appearance of wrangling and disputation. Time moves on the same, whatever disparity there may be in our mode of keeping count of it, like true fame in spite of the cavils and contradictions of the critics. I am no friend to repeating watches. The only pleasant association I have with them is the account given by Rousseau of some French lady, who sat up reading the *New Heloise* when it first came out, and ordering her maid to sound the repeater, found it was too late to go to bed, and continued reading on till morning. Yet how different is the interest excited by this story from the account which Rousseau somewhere else gives of his sitting up with his father reading romances, when a boy, till they were startled by the swallows twittering in their nests at day-break, and the father cried out, half angry and ashamed — '*Allons, mon fils; je suis plus enfant que toi!*' In general, I have heard repeating watches sounded in stage-coaches at night, when some fellow-traveller suddenly awaking and wondering what was the hour, another has very deliberately taken out his watch, and pressing the spring, it has counted out the time; each petty stroke acting like a sharp puncture on the ear, and informing me of the dreary hours I had already passed, and of the more dreary ones I had to wait till morning.

The great advantage, it is true, which clocks have over watches and other dumb reckoners of time is, that for the most part they strike the hour—that they are as it were the mouth-pieces of time; that they not only point it to the eye, but impress it on the ear; that they 'lend it both an understanding and a tongue.' Time thus speaks to us in an audible and warning voice. Objects of sight are easily distinguished by the sense, and suggest useful reflections to the mind; sounds, from their intermittent nature, and perhaps other causes, appeal more to the imagination, and strike upon the heart. But to

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do this, they must be unexpected and involuntary—there must be no trick in the case—they should not be squeezed out with a finger and a thumb; there should be nothing optional, personal in their occurrence; they should be like stern, inflexible monitors, that nothing can prevent from discharging their duty. Surely, if there is any thing with which we should not mix up our vanity and self-consequence, it is with Time, the most independent of all things. All the sublimity, all the superstition that hang upon this palpable mode of announcing its flight, are chiefly attached to this circumstance. Time would lose its abstracted character, if we kept it like a curiosity or a jack-in-a-box: its prophetic warnings would have no effect, if it obviously spoke only at our prompting, like a paltry ventriloquism. The clock that tells the coming, dreaded hour—the castle bell, that ‘with its brazen throat and iron tongue, sounds one unto the drowsy ear of night’—the curfew, ‘swinging slow with sullen roar’ o’er wizard stream or fountain, are like a voice from other worlds, big with unknown events. The last sound, which is still kept up as an old custom in many parts of England, is a great favourite with me. I used to hear it when a boy. It tells a tale of other times. The days that are past, the generations that are gone, the tangled forest glades and hamlets brown of my native country, the woodsman’s art, the Norman warrior armed for the battle or in his festive hall, the conqueror’s iron rule and peasant’s lamp extinguished, all start up at the clamorous peal, and fill my mind with fear and wonder. I confess, nothing at present interests me but what has been—the recollection of the impressions of my early life, or events long past, of which only the dim traces remain in a smouldering ruin or half-obsolete custom. That *things should be that are now no more*, creates in my mind the most unfeigned astonishment. I cannot solve the mystery of the past, nor exhaust my pleasure in it. The years, the generations to come, are nothing to me. We care no more about the world in the year 2300 than we do about one of the planets. Even George IV. is better than the Earl of Windsor. We might as well make a voyage to the moon as think of stealing a march upon Time with impunity. *De non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio.* Those who are to come after us and push us from the stage seem like upstarts and pretenders, that may be said to exist *in vacuo*, we know not upon what, except as they are blown up with vain and self-conceit by their patrons among the moderns. But the ancients are true and *bonâ-fide* people, to whom we are bound by aggregate knowledge and filial ties, and in whom seen by the mellow light of history we feel our own existence doubled and our pride consoled, as we ruminate on the vestiges of the past. The public in general,

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however, do not carry this speculative indifference about the future to what is to happen to themselves, or to the part they are to act in the busy scene. For my own part, I do; and the only wish I can form, or that ever prompts the passing sigh, would be to live some of my years over again—they would be those in which I enjoyed and suffered most!

The ticking of a clock in the night has nothing very interesting nor very alarming in it, though superstition has magnified it into an omen. In a state of vigilance or debility, it preys upon the spirits like the persecution of a teasing pertinacious insect; and haunting the imagination after it has ceased in reality, is converted into the death-watch. Time is rendered vast by contemplating its minute portions thus repeatedly and painfully urged upon our attention, as the ocean in its immensity is composed of water-drops. A clock striking with a clear and silver sound is a great relief in such circumstances, breaks the spell, and resembles a sylph-like and friendly spirit in the room. Foreigners, with all their tricks and contrivances upon clocks and time-pieces, are strangers to the sound of village-bells, though perhaps a people that can dance may dispense with them. They impart a pensive, wayward pleasure to the mind, and are a kind of chronology of happy events, often serious in the retrospect—births, marriages, and so forth. Coleridge calls them 'the poor man's only music.' A village spire in England peeping from its cluster of trees is always associated in imagination with this cheerful accompaniment, and may be expected to pour its joyous tidings on the gale. In Catholic countries, you are stunned with the everlasting tolling of bells to prayers or for the dead. In the Apennines, and other wild and mountainous districts of Italy, the little chapel-bell with its simple tinkling sound has a romantic and charming effect. The Monks in former times appear to have taken a pride in the construction of bells as well as churches; and some of those of the great cathedrals abroad (as at Cologne and Rouen) may be fairly said to be hoarse with counting the flight of ages. The chimes in Holland are a nuisance. They dance in the hours and the quarters. They leave no respite to the imagination. Before one set has done ringing in your ears, another begins. You do not know whether the hours move or stand still, go backwards or forwards, so fantastical and perplexing are their accompaniments. Time is a more staid personage, and not so full of gambols. It puts you in mind of a tune with variations, or of an embroidered dress. Surely, nothing is more simple than time. His march is straightforward; but we should have leisure allowed us to look back upon the distance we have come, and not be counting his steps every moment. Time in Holland is a

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foolish old fellow with all the antics of a youth, who 'goes to church in a coranto, and lights his pipe in a cinque-pace.' The chimes with us, on the contrary, as they come in every three or four hours, are like stages in the journey of the day. They give a fillip to the lazy, creeping hours, and relieve the lassitude of country-places. At noon, their desultory, trivial song is diffused through the hamlet with the odour of rashers of bacon; at the close of day they send the toil-worn sleepers to their beds. Their discontinuance would be a great loss to the thinking or unthinking public. Mr. Wordsworth has painted their effect on the mind when he makes his friend Matthew, in a fit of inspired dotage,

'Sing those witty rhymes  
About the crazy old church-clock  
And the bewilder'd chimes.'

The tolling of the bell for deaths and executions is a fearful summons, though, as it announces, not the advance of time but the approach of fate, it happily makes no part of our subject. Otherwise, the 'sound of the bell' for Macheath's execution in the 'Beggar's Opera,' or for that of the Conspirators in 'Venice Preserved,' with the roll of the drum at a soldier's funeral, and a digression to that of my Uncle Toby, as it is so finely described by Sterne, would furnish ample topics to descant upon. If I were a moralist, I might disapprove the ringing in the new and ringing out the old year.

'Why dance ye, mortals, o'er the grave of Time?'

St Paul's bell tolls only for the death of our English kings, or a distinguished personage or two, with long intervals between.<sup>1</sup>

Those who have no artificial means of ascertaining the progress of time, are in general the most acute in discerning its immediate signs, and are most retentive of individual dates. The mechanical aids to knowledge are not sharpeners of the wits. The understanding of a savage is a kind of natural almanac, and more true in its prognostication of the future. In his mind's eye he sees what has happened or what is likely to happen to him, 'as in a map the voyager his course.' Those who read the times and seasons in the aspect of the heavens and the configurations of the stars, who count by moons and know when the sun rises and sets, are by no means ignorant of their own affairs or of the common concatenation of events. People in such situations have not their faculties distracted by any multiplicity of

<sup>1</sup> Rousseau has admirably described the effect of bells on the imagination in a passage in the Confessions, beginning '*Le son des cloches m'a toujours singulièrement affecté*,' &c.

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inquiries beyond what befalls themselves, and the outward appearances that mark the change. There is, therefore, a simplicity and clearness in the knowledge they possess, which often puzzles the more learned. I am sometimes surprised at a shepherd-boy by the roadside, who sees nothing but the earth and sky, asking me the time of day—he ought to know so much better than any one how far the sun is above the horizon. I suppose he wants to ask a question of a passenger, or to see if he has a watch. Robinson Crusoe lost his reckoning in the monotony of his life and that bewildering dream of solitude, and was fain to have recourse to the notches in a piece of wood. What a diary was his! And how time must have spread its circuit round him, vast and pathless as the ocean!

For myself, I have never had a watch nor any other mode of keeping time in my possession, nor ever wish to learn how time goes. It is a sign I have had little to do, few avocations, few engagements. When I am in a town, I can hear the clock; and when I am in the country, I can listen to the silence. What I like best is to lie whole mornings on a sunny bank on Salisbury Plain, without any object before me, neither knowing nor caring how time passes, and thus ‘with light-winged toys of feathered Idleness’ to melt down hours to moments. Perhaps some such thoughts as I have here set down float before me like motes before my half-shut eyes, or some vivid image of the past by forcible contrast rushes by me—‘Diana and her fawn, and all the glories of the antique world;’ then I start away to prevent the iron from entering my soul, and let fall some tears into that stream of time which separates me farther and farther from all I once loved! At length I rouse myself from my reverie, and home to dinner, proud of killing time with thought, nay even without thinking. Somewhat of this idle humour I inherit from my father, though he had not the same freedom from *ennui*, for he was not a metaphysician; and there were stops and vacant intervals in his being which he did not know how to fill up. He used in these cases, and as an obvious resource, carefully to wind up his watch at night, and ‘with lack-lustre eye’ more than once in the course of the day look to see what o’clock it was. Yet he had nothing else in his character in common with the elder Mr. Shandy. Were I to attempt a sketch of him, for my own or the reader’s satisfaction, it would be after the following manner:—but now I recollect, I have done something of the kind once before, and were I to resume the subject here, some bat or owl of a critic, with spectacled gravity, might swear I had stolen the whole of this Essay from myself—or (what is worse) from him! So I had better let it go as it is.

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### ESSAY XXIII

#### WHY THE HEROES OF ROMANCES ARE INSIPID

BECAUSE it is taken for granted that they must be amiable and interesting, in the first instance, and like other things that are taken for granted, is but indifferently, or indeed cannot be made out at all in the sequel. To put it to the proof, to give illustrations of it, would be to throw a doubt upon the question. They have only to show themselves to ensure conquest. Indeed, the reputation of their victories goes before them, and is a pledge of their success before they even appear. They are, or are supposed to be, so amiable, so handsome, so accomplished, so captivating, that all hearts bow before them, and all the women are in love with them without knowing why or wherefore, except that it is understood that they are to be so. All obstacles vanish without a finger lifted or a word spoken, and the effect is produced without a blow being struck. When there is this imaginary charm at work, every thing they could do or say must weaken the impression, like arguments brought in favour of a self-evident truth: they very wisely say or do little or nothing, rely on their names and the author's good word, look, smile, and are adored; but to all but the heroines of romance and their confidantes, are exceedingly uninteresting and *common-place* personages, either great coxcombs or wonderfully insipid. When a lover is able to look unutterable things which produce the desired effect, what occasion for him to exert his eloquence or make an impassioned speech in order to bring about a revolution in his favour, which is already accomplished by other less doubtful means? When the impression at first sight is complete and irresistible, why throw away any farther thoughts or words to make it more so? This were 'to gild refined gold, to paint the lily, to smooth the ice, to throw a perfume on the violet, or add another hue unto the rainbow, or seek with taper-light the beauteous eye of Heaven to garnish,' which has been pronounced to be 'wasteful and superfluous excess.' Authors and novel-writers therefore reserve for their second-rate and less prominent characters, the artillery of words, the arts of persuasion, and all the unavailing battery of hopeless attentions and fine sentiment, which are of no use to the more accomplished gallant, who makes his triumphant approaches by stolen glances and breathing sighs, and whose appearance alone supersedes the disclosure of all his other implied perfections and an importunate display of a long list of titles to the favour of the fair, which, as they are not insisted on, it would be vain and unbecoming

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to produce to the gaze of the world, or for the edification of the curious reader. It is quite enough if the lady is satisfied with her choice, and if (as generally happens both as a cause and consequence in such cases) the gentleman is satisfied with himself. If he indeed seemed to entertain a doubt upon the subject, the spell of his fascination would be broken, and the author would be obliged to derogate from the *beau-ideal* of his character, and make him do something to deserve the good opinion that might be entertained of him, and to which he himself had not led the way by boundless self-complacency and the conscious assurance of infallible success.

Another circumstance that keeps our novel-heroes in the background is, that if there was any doubt of their success, or they were obliged to employ the ordinary and vulgar means to establish their superiority over every one else, they would be no longer those 'faultless monsters' which it is understood that they must be to fill their part in the drama. The discarded or despairing, not the favoured lovers, are unavoidably the most interesting persons in the story. In fact, the principals are already disposed of in the first page; they are destined for each other by an unaccountable and uncontrollable sympathy: the ceremony is in a manner over, and they are already married people, with all the lawful attributes and indifference belonging to the character. To produce an interest, there must be mixed motives, alternate hope and fear, difficulties to struggle with, sacrifices to make; but the true hero of romance is too fine a gentleman to be subjected to this rude ordeal, or mortifying exposure, which devolves upon some much more unworthy and unpretending personage. The beauty of the outline must not be disturbed by the painful conflicts of passion or the strong contrast of light and shade. The taste of the heroic cannot swerve for a moment from the object of its previous choice, who must never be placed in disadvantageous circumstances. The top characters occupy a certain prescriptive rank in the world of romance, by the rules of etiquette and laws of this sort of fictitious composition, reign like princes, and have only to do nothing to forfeit their privileges or compromise their supposed dignity.

The heroes of the old romances, the Grand Cyruses, the Artamenes, and Oroondates, are in this respect better than the moderns. They had their steel helmet and plume of feathers, the glittering spear and shield, the barbed steed, and the spread banner, and had knightly service to perform in joust and tournament, in the field of battle or the deep forest, besides the duty which they owed to their 'mistress' eyebrow,' and the favours they received at her hands. They were comparatively picturesque and adventurous personages, and men of action in the tented field, and lost all title to the smile of beauty if



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they did not deserve it by feats of prowess, and by the valour of their arms. However insipid they might be as accepted lovers, in their set speeches and improgressive languishments by which they paid their court to their hearts' idols, the 'fairest of the fair,' yet in their character of warriors and heroes, they were men of mettle, and had something in them. They did not merely sigh and smile and kneel in the presence of their mistresses—they had to unhorse their adversaries in combat, to storm castles, to vanquish giants, and lead armies. So far, so well. In the good old times of chivalry and romance, favour was won and maintained by the bold achievements and fair fame of the chosen knight, which keeps up a show of suspense and dramatic interest, instead of depending, as in more effeminate times, on taste, sympathy, and a refinement of sentiment and manners, of the delicacy of which it is impossible to convey any idea by words or actions. Even in the pompous and affected courtship of the romances of the seventeenth century (now, alas! exploded) the interviews between the lovers are so rare and guarded, their union, though agreed upon and inevitable, is so remote, the smile with which the lady regards her sworn champion, though as steady as that of one of the fixed stars, is like them so cold, as to give a tone of passion and interest to their enamoured flights, as though they were affected by the chances and changes of sublunary affairs. I confess I have read some of these fabulous folios formerly with no small degree of delight and breathless anxiety, particularly that of 'Cassandra'; and would willingly indeed go over it again to catch even a faint, a momentary glimpse of the pleasure with which I used at one period to peruse its prolix descriptions and high-flown sentiments. Not only the Palmerins of England and Amadis of Gaul, who made their way to their mistresses' hearts by slaying giants and taming dragons, but the heroes of the French romances of intrigue and gallantry which succeeded those of necromancy and chivalry, and where the adventurers for the prize have to break through the fences of morality and scruples of conscience instead of stone-walls and enchantments dire, are to be excepted from the censure of downright insipidity which attaches to those ordinary drawing-room heroes, who are installed in the good graces of their Divinities by a look, and keep their places there by the force of *still life*! It is Gray who cries out, 'Be mine to read eternal new romances of Marivaux and Crebillon!' I could say the same of those of Madame La Fayette and the Duke de la Rochefoucault. 'The Princess of Cleves' is a most charming work of this kind; and the Duke de Nemours is a great favourite with me. He is perhaps the most brilliant personage that ever entered upon the *tapis* of a drawing-room, or trifled at a lady's toilette.

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I prefer him, I own, vastly to Richardson's Sir Charles Grandison, whom I look upon as the prince of coxcombs; and so much the more impertinent as he is a moral one. His character appears to me 'ugly all over with affectation.' There is not a single thing that Sir Charles Grandison does or says all through the book from liking to any person or object but himself, and with a view to answer to a certain standard of perfection for which he pragmatically sets up. He is always thinking of himself, and trying to show that he is the wisest, happiest, and most virtuous person in the whole world. He is (or would be thought) a code of Christian ethics; a compilation and abstract of all gentlemanly accomplishments. There is nothing, I conceive, that excites so little sympathy as this inordinate egotism; or so much disgust as this everlasting self-complacency. Yet this self-admiration, brought forward on every occasion as the incentive to every action and reflected from all around him, is the burden and pivot of the story. 'Is not the man Sir Charles Grandison?'—is what he and all the other persons concerned are continually repeating to themselves. His preference of the little, insignificant, selfish, affected, puritanical Miss Byron, who is remarkable for nothing but her conceit of herself and her lover, to the noble Clementina, must for ever stamp him for the poltroon and blockhead that he was. What a contrast between these two females—the one, the favourite heroine, settling her idle punctilios and the choice of her ribbons for the wedding-day with equal interest, the other, self-devoted, broken-hearted, generous, disinterested, pouring out her whole soul in the fervent expressions and dying struggles of an unfortunate and hopeless affection! It was impossible indeed for the genius of the author (strive all he could) to put the prettinesses and coquettish scruples of the bride-elect upon a par with the eloquent despair and impassioned sentiments of her majestic but unsuccessful rival. Nothing can show more clearly that the height of good fortune and of that conventional faultlessness which is supposed to secure it, is incompatible with any great degree of interest. Lady Clementina should have been married to Sir Charles to surfeit her of a coxcomb—Miss Byron to Lovelace to plague her with a rake! Have we not sometimes seen such matches? A slashing critic of my acquaintance once observed, that 'Richardson would be surprised in the next world to find Lovelace in Heaven and Grandison in Hell!' Without going this orthodox length, I must say there is something in Lovelace's vices more attractive than in the other's best virtues. Clarissa's attachment seems as natural as Clementina's is romantic. There is a *regality* about Lovelace's manner, and he appears clothed in a panoply of wit, gaiety, spirit, and enterprise, that is criticism-proof. If he had not possessed these dazzling qualities, nothing

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could have made us forgive for an instant his treatment of the spotless Clarissa ; but indeed they might be said to be mutually attracted to and extinguished in each other's dazzling lustre ! When we think of Lovelace and his luckless exploits, we can hardly be persuaded at this time of day that he wore a wig. Yet that he did so is evident ; for Miss Howe when she gave him that spirited box on the ear, struck the powder out of it ! Mr. B. in ' Pamela ' has all the insipidity, that arises from patronising beauty and condescending to virtue. Pamela herself is delightfully made out ; but she labours under considerable disadvantages, and is far from a *regular* heroine. Sterne (thank God !) has neither hero nor heroine, and he does very well without them.

Many people find fault with Fielding's Tom Jones as gross and immoral. For my part, I have doubts of his being so very handsome from the author's always talking about his beauty, and I suspect he was a clown, from being constantly assured he was so very genteel. Otherwise, I think Jones acquits himself very well both in his actions and speeches, as a lover and as a *trencher-man* whenever he is called upon. Some persons, from their antipathy to that headlong impulse, of which Jones was the slave, and to that morality of good-nature which in him is made a foil to principle, have gone so far as to prefer Blifil as the *prettier fellow* of the two. I certainly cannot subscribe to this opinion, which perhaps was never meant to have followers, and has nothing but its singularity to recommend it. Joseph Andrews is a hero of the shoulder-knot : it would be hard to canvass his pretensions too severely, especially considering what a patron he has in Parson Adams. That one character would cut up into a hundred fine gentlemen and novel-heroes ! Booth is another of the good-natured tribe, a fine man, a very fine man ! But there is a want of spirit to animate the well-meaning mass. He hardly deserved to have the hashed mutton kept waiting for him. The author has redeemed himself in Amelia ; but a heroine with a *broken nose* and who was a married woman besides, must be rendered truly interesting and amiable to make up for superficial objections. The character of the Noble Peer in this novel is *not* insipid. If Fielding could have made virtue as admirable as he could make vice detestable, he would have been a greater master even than he was. I do not understand what those critics mean who say he got all his characters out of ale-houses. It is true he did some of them.

Smollett's heroes are neither one thing nor the other : neither very refined nor very insipid. Wilson in Humphrey Clinker comes the nearest to the *beau-ideal* of this character, the favourite of the novel-reading and boarding-school girl. Narcissa and Emilia Gauntlet are

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very charming girls ; and Monimia in Count Fathom is a fine monumental beauty. But perhaps he must be allowed to be most *at home* in Winifred Jenkins !

The women have taken this matter up in our own time : let us see what they have made of it. Mrs. Radcliffe's heroes and lovers are perfect in their kind ; nobody can find any fault with them, for nobody knows any thing about them. They are described as very handsome, and quite unmeaning and inoffensive.

' Her heroes have no character at all.'

Theodore, Valancourt,—what delightful names ! and there is nothing else to distinguish them by. Perhaps, however, this indefiniteness is an advantage. We add expression to the inanimate outline, and fill up the blank with all that is amiable, interesting, and romantic. A long ride without a word spoken, a meeting that comes to nothing, a parting look, a moonlight scene, or evening skies that paint their sentiments for them better than the lovers can do for themselves, farewells too full of anguish, deliverances too big with joy to admit of words, suppressed sighs, faint smiles, the freshness of the morning, pale melancholy, the clash of swords, the clank of chains that make the fair one's heart sink within her, these are the chief means by which the admired authoress of 'The Romance of the Forest' and 'The Mysteries of Udolpho' keeps alive an ambiguous interest in the bosom of her fastidious readers, and elevates the lover into the hero of the fable. Unintelligible distinctions, impossible attempts, a delicacy that shrinks from the most trifling objection, and an enthusiasm that rushes on its fate, such are the charming and teasing contradictions that form the flimsy texture of a modern romance ! If the lover in such critical cases was any thing but a lover, he would cease to be the most amiable of all characters in the abstract and by way of excellence, and would be a traitor to the cause ; to give reasons or to descend to particulars, is to doubt the omnipotence of love and shake the empire of credulous fancy ; a sounding name, a graceful form, are all that is necessary to suspend the whole train of tears, sighs, and the softest emotions upon ; the ethereal nature of the passion requires ethereal food to sustain it ; and our youthful hero, in order to be perfectly interesting, must be drawn as perfectly insipid !

I cannot, however, apply this charge to Mrs. Inchbald's heroes or heroines. However finely drawn, they are an essence of sentiment. Their words are composed of the warmest breath, their tears scald, their sighs stifle. Her characters seem moulded of a softer clay, the work of fairest hands. Miss Milner is enchanting. Doriforth indeed is severe, and has a very stately opinion of himself, but he has

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spirit and passion. Lord Norwynne is the most unpleasant and obdurate. He seduces by his situation and kills by indifference, as is natural in such cases. But still through all these the fascination of the writer's personal feelings never quits you. On the other hand, Miss Burney's (Madame D'Arblay's) *forte* is ridicule, or an exquisite tact for minute absurdities, and when she aims at being fine she only becomes affected. No one had ever much less of the romantic. Lord Orville is a condescending suit of clothes; yet certainly the sense which Evelina has of the honour done her is very prettily managed. Sir Clement Willoughby is a much gayer and more animated person, though his wit outruns his discretion. Young Delville is the hero of punctilio—a perfect diplomatist in the art of love-making—and draws his parallels and sits down as deliberately before the citadel of his mistress's heart, as a cautious general lays siege to an impregnable fortress. Cecilia is not behind-hand with him in the game of studied cross-purposes and affected delays, and is almost the veriest and most provoking trifier on record. Miss Edgeworth, I believe, has no heroes. Her *trenchant* pen cuts away all extravagance and idle pretence, and leaves nothing but common sense, prudence, and propriety behind it, wherever it comes.

I do not apprehend that the heroes of the Author of Waverley form any very striking exception to the common rule. They conform to their designation and follow the general law of their being. They are for the most part very equivocal and undecided personages, who receive their governing impulse from accident, or are puppets in the hands of their mistresses, such as Waverley, Ivanhoe, Frank Osbaldistone, Henry Morton, &c. I do not say that any of these are absolutely insipid, but they have in themselves no leading or master-traits, and they are worked out of very listless and inert materials into a degree of force and prominence solely by the genius of the author. Instead of acting, they are acted upon, and keep in the back-ground and in a neutral posture, till they are absolutely forced to come forward, and it is then with a very amiable reservation of modest scruples. Does it not seem almost, or generally speaking, as if a character to be put in this responsible situation of candidate for the highest favour of the public at large, or of the fair in particular, who is to conciliate all suffrages and concentrate all interests, must really have nothing in him to please or give offence, that he must be left a negative, feeble character without untractable or uncompromising points, and with a few slight recommendations and obvious good qualities which every one may be supposed to improve upon and fill up according to his or her inclination or fancy and the model of perfection previously existing in the mind? It is a privilege claimed, no

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doubt, by the fair reader to make out the object of her admiration and interest according to her own choice; and the same privilege, if not openly claimed, may be covertly exercised by others. We are all fond of our own creations, and if the author does little to his chief character and allows us to have a considerable hand in it, it may not suffer in our opinion from this circumstance. In fact, the hero of the work is not so properly the chief object in it, as a sort of blank left open to the imagination, or lay-figure on which the reader disposes whatever drapery he pleases! Of all Sir Walter's characters the most dashing and spirited is the Sultan Saladin. But he is not meant for a hero, nor fated to be a lover. He is a collateral and incidental performer in the scene. His movements therefore remain free, and he is master of his own resplendent energies, which produce so much the more daring and felicitous an effect. So far from being intended to please all tastes or the most squeamish, he is not meant for any taste. He has no pretensions, and stands upon the sole ground of his own heroic acts and sayings. The author has none of the timidity or mawkishness arising from a fear of not coming up to his own professions, or to the expectations excited in the reader's mind. Any striking trait, any interesting exploit is more than was bargained for—is heaped measure, running over. There is no idle, nervous apprehension of falling short of perfection, arresting the hand or diverting the mind from truth and nature. If the Pagan is not represented as a monster and barbarian, all the rest is a god-send. Accordingly all is spontaneous, bold, and original in this beautiful and glowing design, which is as magnificent as it is magnanimous.—Lest I should forget it, I will mention while I am on the subject of Scotch novels, that Mackenzie's 'Man of Feeling' is not without interest, but it is an interest brought out in a very singular and unprecedented way. He not merely says or does nothing to deserve the approbation of the goddess of his idolatry, but from extreme shyness and sensitiveness, instead of presuming on his merits, gets out of her way, and only declares his passion on his death-bed. Poor Harley!—Mr. Godwin's Falkland is a very high and heroic character: he, however, is not a love-hero; and the only part in which an episode of this kind is introduced, is of the most trite and mawkish description. The case is different in St. Leon. The author's resuscitated hero there quaffs joy, love, and immortality with a considerable *gusto*, and with appropriate manifestations of triumph.

As to the heroes of the philosophical school of romance, such as Goethe's Werther, &c., they are evidently out of the pale of this reasoning. Instead of being common-place and insipid, they are one violent and startling paradox from beginning to end. Instead of

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being cast in stiff unmeaning mould, they 'all germins spill at once' that make mere mortal men. They run a-tilt at all established usages and prejudices, and upset all the existing order of society. There is plenty of interest here; and instead of complaining of a calm, we are borne along by a hurricane of passion and eloquence, certainly without any thing of 'temperance that may give it smoothness.' Schiller's Moor, Kotzebue's heroes, and all the other German prodigies are of this stamp.

Shakespear's lovers and Boccaccio's I like much: they seem to me full of tenderness and manly spirit, and free from insipidity and cant. Otway's Jaffier is, however, the true woman's man—full of passion and effeminacy, a mixture of strength and weakness. Perhaps what I have said above may suggest the true reason and apology for Milton's having unwittingly made Satan the hero of 'Paradise Lost.' He suffers infinite losses, and makes the most desperate efforts to recover or avenge them; and it is the struggle with fate and the privation of happiness that sharpens our desires, or enhances our sympathy with good or evil. We have little interest in unalterable felicity, nor can we join with heart and soul in the endless symphonies and exulting hallelujahs of the spirits of the blest. The remorse of a fallen spirit or 'tears such as angels shed' touch us more nearly.

### ESSAY XXIV

#### THE SHYNESS OF SCHOLARS

'And of his port as meek as is a maid.'

SCHOLARS lead a contemplative and retired life, both which circumstances must be supposed to contribute to the effect in question. A life of study is also conversant with high and *ideal* models, which gives an ambitious turn to the mind; and pride is nearly akin to delicacy of feeling.

That a life of privacy and obscurity should render its votaries bashful and awkward, or unfit them for the routine of society, from the want both of a habit of going into company and from ignorance of its usages, is obvious to remark. No one can be expected to do that well or without a certain degree of hesitation and restraint, which he is not accustomed to do except on particular occasions, and at rare intervals. You might as rationally set a scholar or a clown on a tight-rope and expect them to dance gracefully and with

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every appearance of ease, as introduce either into the gay, laughing circle, and suppose that he will acquit himself handsomely and come off with applause in the retailing of anecdote or the interchange of repartee. 'If you have not seen the Court, your manners must be naught; and if your manners are naught, you must be damned,' according to Touchstone's reasoning. The other cause lies rather deeper, and is so far better worth considering, perhaps. A student, then, that is, a man who condemns himself to toil for a length of time and through a number of volumes in order to arrive at a conclusion, naturally loses that smartness and ease which distinguish the gay and thoughtless rattler. There is a certain elasticity of movement and hey-day of the animal spirits seldom to be met with but in those who have never cared for any thing beyond the moment, or looked lower than the surface. The scholar having to encounter doubts and difficulties on all hands, and indeed to apply by way of preference to those subjects which are most beset with mystery, becomes hesitating, sceptical, irresolute, absent, dull. All the processes of his mind are slow, cautious, circuitous, instead of being prompt, heedless, straightforward. Finding the intricacies of the path increase upon him in every direction, this can hardly be supposed to add to the lightness of his step, the confidence of his brow as he advances. He does not skim the surface, but dives under it like the mole to make his way darkling, by imperceptible degrees, and throwing up heaps of dirt and rubbish over his head to track his progress. He is therefore startled at any sudden light, puzzled by any casual question, taken unawares and at a disadvantage in every critical emergency. He must have time given him to collect his thoughts, to consider objections, to make farther inquiries, and come to no conclusion at last. This is very different from the dashing, *off-hand* manner of the mere man of business or fashion; and he who is repeatedly found in situations to which he is unequal (particularly if he is of a reflecting and candid temper) will be apt to look foolish, and to lose both his countenance and his confidence in himself—at least as to the opinion others entertain of him, and the figure he is likely on any occasion to make in the eyes of the world. The course of his studies has not made him wise, but has taught him the uncertainty of wisdom; and has supplied him with excellent reasons for suspending his judgment, when another would throw the casting-weight of his own presumption or interest into the scale.

The inquirer after truth learns to take nothing for granted; least of all, to make an assumption of his own superior merits. He would have nothing proceed without proper proofs and an exact scrutiny; and would neither be imposed upon himself, nor impose upon others



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by shallow and hasty appearances. It takes years of patient toil and devoted enthusiasm to master any art or science; and after all, the success is doubtful. He infers that other triumphs must be prepared in like manner at an humble distance: he cannot bring himself to imagine that any object worth seizing on or deserving of regard, can be carried by a *coup de main*. So far from being proud or puffed up by them, he would be ashamed and degraded in his own opinion by any advantages that were to be obtained by such cheap and vulgar means as putting a good face on the matter, as strutting and vapouring about his own pretensions. He would not place himself on a level with bullies or coxcombs; nor believe that those whose favour he covets, can be the dupes of either. Whatever is excellent in his fanciful creed is hard of attainment; and he would (perhaps absurdly enough) have the means in all cases answerable to the end. He knows that there are difficulties in his favourite pursuits to puzzle the will, to tire the patience, to unbrace the strongest nerves, and make the stoutest courage quail; and he would fain think that if there is any object more worthy than another to call forth the earnest solicitude, the hopes and fears of a wise man, and to make his heart yearn within him at the most distant prospect of success, this precious prize in the grand lottery of life is not to be had for the asking for, or from the mere easy indifference or overbearing effrontery with which you put in your claim. He is aware that it will be long enough before any one paints a fine picture by walking up and down and admiring himself in the glass; or writes a fine poem by being delighted with the sound of his own voice; or solves a single problem in philosophy by swaggering and haughty airs. He conceives that it is the same with the way of the world—woos the fair as he woos the Muse; in conversation never puts in a word till he has something better to say than any one else in the room; in business never strikes while the iron is hot, and flings away all his advantages by endeavouring to prove to his own and the satisfaction of others, that he is clearly entitled to them. It never once enters into his head (till it is too late) that impudence is the current coin in the affairs of life; that he who doubts his own merit, never has credit given him by others; that Fortune does not stay to have her overtures canvassed; that he who neglects opportunity, can seldom command it a second time; that the world judge by appearances, not by realities; and that they sympathise more readily with those who are prompt to do themselves justice, and to show off their various qualifications or enforce their pretensions to the utmost, than with those who wait for others to award their claims, and carry their fastidious refinement into helplessness and imbecility. Thus ‘fools

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rush in where angels fear to tread'; and modest merit finds to its cost, that the bold hand and dauntless brow succeed where timidity and bashfulness are pushed aside; that the gay, laughing eye is preferred to dejection and gloom, health and animal spirits to the shattered, sickly frame and trembling nerves; and that to succeed in life, a man should carry about with him the outward, and incontrovertible signs of success, and of his satisfaction with himself and his prospects, instead of plaguing every body near him with fantastical scruples and his ridiculous anxiety to realise an unattainable standard of perfection. From holding back himself, the speculative enthusiast is thrust back by others: his pretensions are insulted and trampled on; and the repeated and pointed repulses he meets with, make him still more unwilling to encounter, and more unable to contend with those that await him in the prosecution of his career. He therefore retires from the contest altogether, or remains in the back-ground, a passive but uneasy spectator of a scene, in which he finds from experience, that confidence, alertness, and superficial acquirements are of more avail than all the refinement and delicacy in the world. Action, in truth, is referable chiefly to quickness and strength of resolution, rather than to depth of reasoning or scrupulous nicety: again, it is to be presumed that those who show a proper reliance on themselves, will not betray the trust we place in them through pusillanimity or want of spirit: in what relates to the opinion of others, which is often formed hastily and on slight acquaintance, much must be allowed to what strikes the senses, to what excites the imagination; and in all popular worldly schemes, popular and worldly means must be resorted to, instead of depending wholly on the hidden and intrinsic merits of the case.

' In peace, there 's nothing so becomes a man  
As modest stillness, and humility :  
But when the blast of war blows in our ears,  
Then imitate the action of the tyger;  
Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,  
Disguise fair nature with hard-favour'd rage :  
Then lend the eye a terrible aspect;  
Let it pry through the portage of the head,  
Like the brass cannon; let the brow o'erwhelm it,  
As fearfully, as doth a galled rock  
O'erhang and jutty his confounded base,  
Swill'd with the wild and wasteful ocean.'

This advice (sensible as it is) is abhorrent to the nature of a man who is accustomed to place all his hopes of victory in reasoning and reflection only. The noisy, rude, gratuitous success of those who have taken so much less pains to deserve it, disgusts and disheartens

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him—he loses his self-possession and self-esteem, has no standard left by which to measure himself or others, and as he cannot be brought to admire them, persuades himself at last that the blame rests with himself; and instead of bespeaking a fashionable dress, learning to bow, or taking a few lessons in boxing or fencing to brace his nerves and raise his spirits, aggravates all his former faults by way of repairing them, grows more jealous of the propriety of every word and look, lowers his voice into a whisper, gives his style the last polish, reconsiders his arguments, refines his sentiments till they evaporate in a sigh, and thus satisfies himself that he can hardly fail, that men judge impartially in the end, that the public will sooner or later do him justice, Fortune smile, and the Fair no longer be averse! *Oh malore!* He is just where he was, or ten times worse off than ever.

There is another circumstance that tends not a little to perplex the judgment, and add to the difficulties of the retired student, when he comes out into the world. He is like one dropped from the clouds. He has hitherto conversed chiefly with historic personages and abstract propositions, and has no just notion of actual men and things. He does not well know how to reconcile the sweeping conclusions he has been taught to indulge in to the cautious and pliant maxims of the world, nor how to compare himself, an inhabitant of Utopia, with sublunary mortals. He has been habituated all his life to look up to a few great names handed down by virtue or science as the ‘Gods of his idolatry,’ as the fixed stars in the firmament of reputation, and to have some respect for himself and other learned men as votaries at the shrine and as appreciating the merits of their idol; but all the rest of the world, who are neither the objects of this sort of homage, nor concerned as a sort of priesthood in collecting and paying it, he looks upon as actually nobody, or as worms crawling upon the face of the earth without intellectual value or pretensions. He is, therefore, a little surprised and shocked to find, when he deigns to mingle with his fellows, those every-day mortals, on ordinary terms, that they are of a height nearly equal to himself, that they have words, ideas, feelings in common with the best, and are not the mere cyphers he had been led to consider them. From having under-rated, he comes to over-rate them. Having dreamt of no such thing, he is more struck with what he finds than perhaps it deserves; magnifies the least glimpse of sense or humour into sterling wit or wisdom; is startled by any objection from so unexpected a quarter; thinks his own advantages of no avail, because they are not the only ones, and shrinks from an encounter with weapons he has not been used to, and from a struggle

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by which he feels himself degraded. The Knight of La Mancha when soundly beaten by the packstaves of the Yanguesian carriers, laid all the blame on his having condescended to fight with plebeians. The pride of learning comes in to aid the awkwardness and bashfulness of the inexperienced novice, converting his want of success into the shame and mortification of defeat in what he habitually considers as a contest with inferiors. Indeed, those will always be found to submit with the worst grace to any check or reverse of this kind in common conversation or reasoning, who have been taught to set the most exclusive and disproportioned value on letters : and the most enlightened and accomplished scholars will be less likely to be humbled or put to the blush by the display of common sense or native talent, than the more ignorant, self-sufficient, and pedantic among the learned ; for that ignorance, self-sufficiency, and pedantry, are sometimes to be reckoned among the attributes of learning, cannot be disputed. These qualities are not very reconcilable with modest merit ; but they are quite consistent with a great deal of blundering, confusion, and want of *tact* in the commerce of the world. The genuine scholar retires from an unequal conflict into silence and obscurity : the pedant swells into self-importance, and renders himself conspicuous by pompous arrogance and absurdity !

It is hard upon those who have ever taken pains or done any thing to distinguish themselves, that they are seldom the trumpeters of their own achievements ; and I believe it may be laid down as a rule, that we receive just as much homage from others as we exact from them by our own declarations, looks, and manner. But no one who has performed any thing great looks big upon it : those who have any thing to boast of are generally silent on that head, and altogether shy of the subject. With Coriolanus, they ‘ will not have their nothings monster’d.’ From familiarity, his own acquirements do not appear so extraordinary to the individual as to others ; and there is a natural want of sympathy in this respect. No one who is really capable of great things is proud or vain of his success ; for he thinks more of what he had hoped or has failed to do, than of what he has done. A habit of extreme exertion, or of anxious suspense, is not one of buoyant overweening self-complacency : those who have all their lives tasked their faculties to the utmost, may be supposed to have quite enough to do without having much disposition left to anticipate their success with confidence, or to glory in it afterwards. The labours of the mind, like the drudgery of the body, depress and take away the usual alacrity of the spirits. Nor can such persons be lifted up with the event ; for the impression of the consequences to result from any arduous undertaking must be

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light and vain, compared with the toil and anxiety accompanying it. It is only those who have done nothing, who fancy they can do every thing; or who have leisure and inclination to admire themselves. To sit before a glass and smile delighted at our own image, is merely a tax on our egotism and self-conceit; and these are resources not easily exhausted in some persons; or if they are, the deficiency is supplied by flatterers who surround the vain, like a natural atmosphere. Fools who take all their opinions at second-hand cannot resist the coxcomb's delight in himself; or it might be said that folly is the natural mirror of vanity. The greatest heroes, it has often been observed, do not show it in their faces; nor do philosophers affect to be thought wise. Little minds triumph on small occasions, or over puny competitors: the loftiest wish for higher opportunities of signalling themselves, or compare themselves with those models that leave them no room for flippant exultation. Either great things are accomplished with labour and pains, which stamp their impression on the general character and tone of feeling; or if this should not be the case (as sometimes happens), and they are the effect of genius and a happiness of nature, then they cost too little to be much thought of, and we rather wonder at others for admiring them, than at ourselves for having performed them. 'Vix ea nostra voco'—is the motto of spontaneous talent; and in neither case is conceit the exuberant growth of great original power or of great attainments.

In one particular, the uneducated man carries it hollow against the man of thought and refinement: the first can shoot in the *long bow*, which the last cannot for the life of him. He who has spent the best part of his time and wasted his best powers in endeavouring to answer the question—'What is truth?'—scorns a lie, and every thing making the smallest approach to one. His mind by habit has become tenacious of, devoted to the truth. The grossness and vulgarity of falsehood shock the delicacy of his perceptions, as much as it would shock the finest artist to be obliged to daub in a sign-post, or scrawl a caricature. He cannot make up his mind to derive any benefit from so pitiful and disgusting a source. Tell me that a man is a metaphysician, and at the same time that he is given to shallow and sordid boasting, and I will not believe you. After striving to raise himself to an equality with truth and nature by patient investigation and refined distinctions (which few can make)—whether he succeed or fail, he cannot stoop to acquire a spurious reputation, or to advance himself or lessen others by paltry artifice and idle rhodomontade, which are in every one's power who has never known the value or undergone the labour of discovering a

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single truth. Gross personal and local interests bear the principal sway with the ignorant or mere man of the world, who considers not what things are in themselves, but what they are to him: the man of science attaches a higher importance to, because he finds a more constant pleasure in, the contemplation and pursuit of general and abstracted truths. Philosophy also teaches self-knowledge; and self-knowledge strikes equally at the root of any inordinate opinion of ourselves, or wish to impress others with idle admiration. Mathematicians have been remarked for persons of strict probity and a conscientious and somewhat literal turn of mind.<sup>1</sup> But are poets and romance-writers equally scrupulous and severe judges of themselves, and martyrs to right principle? I cannot acquit them of the charge of vanity, and a wish to aggrandise themselves in the eyes of the world, at the expense of a little false complaisance (what wonder when the world are so prone to admire, and they are so spoiled by indulgence in self-pleasing fancies?)—but in general they are too much taken up with their *ideal* creations, which have also truth and keeping of their own, to misrepresent or exaggerate matters of fact, or to trouble their heads about them. The poet's waking thoughts are dreams: the liar has all his wits and senses about him, and thinks only of astonishing his hearers by some worthless assertion, a mixture of impudence and cunning. But what shall we say of the clergy and the priests of all countries? Are they not men of learning? And are they not, with few exceptions, noted for imposture and time-serving, much more than for a love of truth and candour? They are good subjects, it is true; bound to keep the peace, and hired to maintain certain opinions, not to inquire into them. So this is an exception to the rule, such as might be expected. I speak of the natural tendencies of things, and not of the false bias that may be given to them by their forced combination with other principles.

The worst effect of this depression of spirits, or of the 'scholar's melancholy,' here spoken of, is when it leads a man, from a distrust of himself, to seek for low company, or to forget it by matching below himself. Gray is to be pitied, whose extreme diffidence or fastidiousness was such as to prevent his associating with his fellow collegians, or mingling with the herd, till at length, like the owl, shutting himself up from society and daylight, he was hunted and hooted at like the owl whenever he chanced to appear, and was even assailed and disturbed in the haunts in 'which he held his solitary

<sup>1</sup> I have heard it said that carpenters, who do every thing by the square and line, are honest men, and I am willing to suppose it. Shakespear, in the 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' makes Snug the Joiner the *moral* man of the piece.

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reign.' He was driven from college to college, and subjected to a persecution the more harassing to a person of his indolent and retired habits. But he only shrunk the more within himself in consequence—read over his favourite authors—corresponded with his distant friends—was terrified out of his wits at the bare idea of having his portrait prefixed to his works; and probably died from nervous agitation at the publicity into which his name had been forced by his learning, taste, and genius. This monastic seclusion and reserve is, however, better than a career such as Porson's; who from not liking the restraints, or not possessing the exterior recommendations of good society, addicted himself to the lowest indulgences, spent his days and nights in cider-cellars and pot-houses, cared not with whom or where he was, so that he had somebody to talk to and something to drink, 'from humble porter to imperial tokay' (*a liquid*, according to his own pun), and fell a martyr, in all likelihood, to what in the first instance was pure *mauvaise honte*. Nothing could overcome his propensity to low society and sotting, but the having something to do, which required his whole attention and faculties; and then he shut himself up for weeks together in his chambers, or at the University, to collate old manuscripts, or edit a Greek tragedy, or expose a grave pedant, without seeing a single boon-companion, or touching a glass of wine. I saw him once at the London Institution with a large patch of coarse brown paper on his nose, the skirts of his rusty black coat hung with cobwebs, and talking in a tone of suavity approaching to condescension to one of the Managers. It is a pity that men should so lose themselves from a certain awkwardness and rusticity at the outset. But did not Sheridan make the same melancholy ending, and run the same fatal career, though in a higher and more brilliant circle? He did; and though not from exactly the same cause (for no one could accuse Sheridan's purple nose and flashing eye of a bashfulness—'modest as morning when she coldly eyes the youthful Phœbus!')—yet it was perhaps from one nearly allied to it, namely, the want of that noble independence and confidence in its own resources which should distinguish genius, and the dangerous ambition to get sponsors and vouchers for it in persons of rank and fashion. The affectation of the society of lords is as mean and low-minded as the love of that of coblers and tapsters. It is that coblers and tapsters may admire, that we wish to be seen in the company of *their* betters. The tone of literary patronage is better than it was a hundred or a hundred and fifty years ago. What dramatic author would think now of getting a lady of quality to take a box at the first night of a play to prevent its being damned by the pit? Do we not read the account of Parson

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Adams taking his ale in Squire Booby's kitchen with mingled incredulity and shame? At present literature has, to a considerable degree, found its level, and is hardly in danger, 'deprived of its natural patrons and protectors, the great and noble, of being trodden in the mire, and trampled under the hoofs of a swinish multitude'—though it can never again hope to be what learning once was in the persons of the priesthood, the lord and sovereign of principalities and powers. Fool that it was ever to forego its privileges, and loosen the strong hold it had on opinion in bigotry and superstition!

I remember hearing a lady of great sense and acuteness speak of it as a painful consequence of the natural shyness of scholars, that from the want of a certain address, or an acquaintance with the common forms of society, they despair of making themselves agreeable to women of education and a certain rank in life, and throw away their fine sentiments and romantic tenderness on chambermaids and mantua-makers. Not daring to hope for success where it would be most desirable, yet anxious to realise in some way the dream of books and of their youth, they are willing to accept a return of affection which they count upon as a tribute of gratitude in those of lower circumstances, (as if gratitude were ever bought by interest), and take up with the first *Dulcinea del Toboso* that they meet with, when, would they only try the experiment, they might do much better. Perhaps so: but there is here also a mixture of pride as well as modesty. The scholar is not only apprehensive of not meeting with a return of fondness where it might be most advantageous to him; but he is afraid of subjecting his self-love to the mortification of a repulse, and to the reproach of aiming at a prize far beyond his deserts. Besides, living (as he does) in an *ideal* world, he has it in his option to clothe his Goddess (be she who or what she may) with all the perfections his heart doats on; and he works up a dowdy of this ambiguous description *à son gré*, as an artist does a piece of dull clay, or the poet the sketch of some unrivalled heroine. The contrast is also the greater (and not the less gratifying as being his own discovery,) between his favourite figure and the back-ground of her original circumstances; and he likes her the better, inasmuch as, like himself, she owes all to her own merit—and *his* notice!

Possibly, the best cure for this false modesty, and for the uneasiness and extravagances it occasions, would be, for the retired and abstracted student to consider that he properly belongs to another sphere of action, remote from the scenes of ordinary life, and may plead the excuse of ignorance, and the privilege granted to strangers and to those who do not speak the same language. If any one is



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travelling in a foreign Diligence, he is not expected to shine nor to put himself forward, nor need he be out of countenance because he cannot: he has only to conform as well as he can to his new and temporary situation, and to study common propriety and simplicity of manners. Every thing has its own limits, a little centre of its own, round which it moves; so that our true wisdom lies in keeping to our own walk in life, however humble or obscure, and being satisfied if we can succeed in it. The best of us can do no more, and we shall only become ridiculous or unhappy by attempting it. We are ashamed, because we are at a loss in things to which we have no pretensions, and try to remedy our mistakes by committing greater. An overweening vanity or self-opinion is, in truth, often at the bottom of this weakness; and we shall be most likely to conquer the one by eradicating the other, or restricting it within due and moderate bounds.

### ESSAY XXV

#### ON PERSONAL IDENTITY

‘Ha! here be three of us sophisticated.’—LEAR.

‘If I were not Alexander, I would be Diogenes!’ said the Macedonian hero; and the cynic might have retorted the compliment upon the prince by saying, that, ‘were he not Diogenes, he would be Alexander!’ This is the universal exception, the invariable reservation that our self-love makes, the utmost point at which our admiration or envy ever arrives—to wish, if we were not ourselves, to be some other individual. No one ever wishes to be another, *instead* of himself. We may feel a desire to change places with others—to have one man’s fortune—another’s health or strength—his wit or learning, or accomplishments of various kinds—

‘Wishing to be like one more rich in hope,  
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,  
Desiring this man’s art, and that man’s scope:’

but we would still be our selves, to possess and enjoy all these, or we would not give a doit for them. But, on this supposition, what in truth should we be the better for them? It is not we, but another, that would reap the benefit; and what do we care about that other? In that case, the present owner might as well continue to enjoy them. *We* should not be gainers by the change. If the meanest beggar who

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crouches at a palace-gate, and looks up with awe and suppliant fear to the proud inmate as he passes, could be put in possession of all the finery, the pomp, the luxury, and wealth that he sees and envies on the sole condition of getting rid, together with his rags and misery, of all recollection that there ever was such a wretch as himself, he would reject the proffered boon with scorn. He might be glad to change situations; but he would insist on keeping his own thoughts, to *compare notes*, and point the transition by the force of contrast. He would not, on any account, forego his self-congratulation on the unexpected accession of good fortune, and his escape from past suffering. All that excites his cupidity, his envy, his repining or despair, is the alternative of some great good to himself; and if, in order to attain that object, he is to part with his own existence to take that of another, he can feel no farther interest in it. This is the language both of passion and reason.

Here lies 'the rub that makes calamity of so long life': for it is not barely the apprehension of the ills that 'in that sleep of death may come,' but also our ignorance and indifference to the promised good, that produces our repugnance and backwardness to quit the present scene. No man, if he had his choice, would be the angel Gabriel to-morrow! What is the angel Gabriel to him but a splendid vision? He might as well have an ambition to be turned into a bright cloud, or a particular star. The interpretation of which is, he can have no sympathy with the angel Gabriel. Before he can be transformed into so bright and ethereal an essence, he must necessarily 'put off this mortal coil'—be divested of all his old habits, passions, thoughts, and feelings—to be endowed with other lofty and beatific attributes, of which he has no notion; and, therefore, he would rather remain a little longer in this mansion of clay, which, with all its flaws, inconveniences, and perplexities, contains all that he has any real knowledge of, or any affection for. When, indeed, he is about to quit it in spite of himself, and has no other chance left to escape the darkness of the tomb, he may then have no objection (making a virtue of necessity) to put on angels' wings, to have radiant locks, to wear a wreath of amaranth, and thus to masquerade it in the skies.

It is an instance of the truth and beauty of the ancient mythology, that the various transmutations it recounts are never voluntary, or of favourable omen, but are interposed as a timely release to those who, driven on by fate, and urged to the last extremity of fear or anguish, are turned into a flower, a plant, an animal, a star, a precious stone, or into some object that may inspire pity or mitigate our regret for their misfortunes. Narcissus was transformed into a flower; Daphne into a laurel; Arethusa into a fountain (by the favour of the gods)—but not till no other remedy was left for their despair. It is a sort of

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smiling cheat upon death, and graceful compromise with annihilation. It is better to exist by proxy, in some softened type and soothing allegory, than not at all—to breathe in a flower or shine in a constellation, than to be utterly forgot; but no one would change his natural condition (if he could help it) for that of a bird, an insect, a beast, or a fish, however delightful their mode of existence, or however enviable he might deem their lot compared to his own. Their thoughts are not our thoughts—their happiness is not our happiness; nor can we enter into it except with a passing smile of approbation, or as a refinement of fancy. As the poet sings:—

‘What more felicity can fall to creature  
Than to enjoy delight with liberty,  
And to be lord of all the works of nature?  
To reign in the air from earth to highest sky;  
To feed on flowers and weeds of glorious feature;  
To taste whatever thing doth please the eye?—  
Who rests not pleased with such happiness,  
Well worthy he to taste of wretchedness!’

‘This is gorgeous description and fine declamation: yet who would be found to act upon it, even in the forming of a wish; or would not rather be the thrall of wretchedness, than launch out (by the aid of some magic spell) into all the delights of such a butterfly state of existence? The French (if any people can) may be said to enjoy this airy, heedless gaiety and unalloyed exuberance of satisfaction: yet what Englishman would deliberately change with them? We would sooner be miserable after our own fashion than happy after theirs. It is not happiness, then, in the abstract, which we seek, that can be addressed as

‘That something still that prompts th’ eternal sigh,  
For which we wish to live or dare to die —’

but a happiness suited to our taste and faculties—that has become a part of ourselves, by habit and enjoyment—that is endeared to us by a thousand recollections, privations, and sufferings. No one, then, would willingly change his country or his kind for the most plausible pretences held out to him. The most humiliating punishment inflicted in ancient fable is the change of sex: not that it was any degradation in itself—but that it must occasion a total derangement of the moral economy and confusion of the sense of personal propriety. The thing is said to have happened, *au sens contraire*, in our time. The story is to be met with in ‘very choice Italian’; and Lord D— tells it in very plain English!

We may often find ourselves envying the possessions of others, and

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sometimes inadvertently indulging a wish to change places with them altogether ; but our self-love soon discovers some excuse to be off the bargain we were ready to strike, and retracts 'vows made in haste, as violent and void.' We might make up our minds to the alteration in every other particular ; but, when it comes to the point, there is sure to be some trait or feature of character in the object of our admiration to which we cannot reconcile ourselves—some favourite quality or darling foible of our own, with which we can by no means resolve to part. The more enviable the situation of another, the more entirely to our taste, the more reluctant we are to leave any part of ourselves behind that would be so fully capable of appreciating all the exquisiteness of its new situation, or not to enter into the possession of such an imaginary reversion of good fortune with all our previous inclinations and sentiments. The outward circumstances were fine : they only wanted a *soul* to enjoy them, and that soul is ours (as the costly ring wants the peerless jewel to perfect and set it off). The humble prayer and petition to sneak into visionary felicity by personal adoption, or the surrender of our own personal pretensions, always ends in a daring project of usurpation, and a determination to expel the actual proprietor, and supply his place so much more worthily with our own identity—not bating a single jot of it. Thus, in passing through a fine collection of pictures, who has not envied the privilege of visiting it every day, and wished to be the owner ? But the rising sigh is soon checked, and 'the native hue of emulation is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,' when we come to ask ourselves not merely whether the owner has any taste at all for these splendid works, and does not look upon them as so much expensive furniture, like his chairs and tables—but whether he has the same precise (and only true) taste that we have—whether he has the very same favourites that we have—whether he may not be so blind as to prefer a Vandyke to a Titian, a Ruysdael to a Claude ;—nay, whether he may not have other pursuits and avocations that draw off his attention from the sole objects of our idolatry, and which seem to us mere impertinences and waste of time ? In that case, we at once lose all patience, and exclaim indignantly, 'Give us back our taste and keep your pictures !' It is not we who should envy them the possession of the treasure, but they who should envy us the true and exclusive enjoyment of it. A similar train of feeling seems to have dictated Warton's spirited Sonnet on visiting Wilton-House :—

' From Pembroke's princely dome, where mimic art  
Decks with a magic hand the dazzling bowers,  
Its living hues where the warm pencil pours,  
And breathing forms from the rude marble start,

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How to life's humbler scene can I depart?  
My breast all glowing from those gorgeous towers,  
In my low cell how cheat the sullen hours?  
Vain the complaint! For Fancy can impart  
(To fate superior and to fortune's power)  
Whate'er adorns the stately storied-hall:  
She, mid the dungeon's solitary gloom,  
Can dress the Graces in their attic pail;  
Bid the green landskip's vernal beauty bloom;  
And in bright trophies clothe the twilight wall.'

One sometimes passes by a gentleman's park, an old family-seat, with its moss-grown ruinous paling, its 'glades mild-opening to the genial day,' or embrowned with forest-trees. Here one would be glad to spend one's life, 'shut up in measureless content,' and to grow old beneath ancestral oaks, instead of gaining a precarious, irksome, and despised livelihood, by indulging romantic sentiments, and writing disjointed descriptions of them. The thought has scarcely risen to the lips, when we learn that the owner of so blissful a seclusion is a thorough-bred fox-hunter, a preserver of the game, a brawling electioneer, a Tory member of parliament, a 'no-Popery' man!—'I'd sooner be a dog, and bay the moon!' Who would be Sir Thomas Lethbridge for his title and estate? asks one man. But would not almost any one wish to be Sir Francis Burdett, the man of the people, the idol of the electors of Westminster? says another. I can only answer for myself. Respectable and honest as he is, there is something in his white boots, and white breeches, and white coat, and white hair, and red face, and white hat, that I cannot, by any effort of candour, confound my personal identity with! If Mr. Hobhouse can prevail on Sir Francis to exchange, let him do so by all means. Perhaps they might contrive to *club* a soul between them! Could I have had my will, I should have been born a lord: but one would not be a booby lord neither. I am haunted by an odd fancy of driving down the Great North Road in a chaise and four, about fifty years ago, and coming to the inn at Ferry-bridge, with out-riders, white favours, and a coronet on the panels; and then I choose my companion in the coach. Really there is a witchcraft in all this that makes it necessary to turn away from it, lest, in the conflict between imagination and impossibility, I should grow feverish and light-headed! But, on the other hand, if one was born a lord, should one have the same idea (that every one else has) of a *peeress in her own right*? Is not distance, giddy elevation, mysterious awe, an impassable gulf, necessary to form this idea of the mind, that fine ligament of 'ethereal braid, sky-woven,' that lets down heaven upon earth, fair as enchantment, soft as Berenice's hair, bright and garlanded like Ariadne's crown;

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and is it not better to have had this idea all through life—to have caught but glimpses of it, to have known it but in a dream—than to have been born a lord ten times over, with twenty pampered menials at one's back, and twenty descents to boast of? It is the envy of certain privileges, the sharp privations we have undergone, the cutting neglect we have met with from the want of birth or title, that gives its zest to the distinction: the thing itself may be indifferent or contemptible enough. It is the *becoming* a lord that is to be desired; but he who becomes a lord in reality is an upstart—a mere pretender, without the sterling essence; so that all that is of any worth in this supposed transition is purely imaginary and impossible. Had I been a lord, I should have married Miss —, and my life would not have been one long-drawn sigh, made up of sweet and bitter regret!<sup>1</sup> Had I been a lord, I would have been a Popish lord, and then I might also have been an honest man:—poor, and then I might have been proud and not vulgar! Kings are so accustomed to look down on all the rest of the world, that they consider the condition of mortality as vile and intolerable, if stripped of royal state, and cry out in the bitterness of their despair, 'Give me a crown, or a tomb!' It should seem from this as if all mankind would change with the first crowned head that could propose the alternative, or that it would be only the presumption of the supposition, or a sense of their own unworthiness, that would deter them. Perhaps there is not a single throne that, if it was to be filled by this sort of voluntary metempsychosis, would not remain empty. Many would, no doubt, be glad to 'monarchise, be feared, and kill with looks' in their own persons and after their own fashion: but who would be the *double* of —, or of those shadows of a shade—those 'tenth transmitters of a foolish face'—Charles x. and Ferdinand vii.? If monarchs have little sympathy with mankind, mankind have even less with monarchs. They are merely to us a sort of state-puppets or royal wax-work, which we may gaze at with superstitious wonder, but have no wish to become; and he who should meditate such a change must not only feel by anticipation an utter contempt for the *slough* of humanity which he is prepared to cast, but must feel an absolute void and want of attraction in those lofty and incomprehensible sentiments which are to supply its place. With respect to actual royalty, the spell is in a great measure broken. But, among ancient monarchs, there is no one, I think, who envies Darius or Xerxes.

<sup>1</sup> When Lord Byron was cut by the great, on account of his quarrel with his wife, he stood leaning on a marble slab at the entrance of a room, while troops of duchesses and countesses passed out. One little, pert, red-haired girl staid a few paces behind the rest; and, as she passed him, said with a nod, 'Aye, you should have married me, and then all this wouldn't have happened to you!'

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One has a different feeling with respect to Alexander or Pyrrhus ; but this is because they were great men as well as great kings, and the soul is up in arms at the mention of their names as at the sound of a trumpet. But as to all the rest—those ‘in the catalogue who go for kings’—the praying, eating, drinking, dressing monarchs of the earth, in time past or present—one would as soon think of wishing to personate the Golden Calf, or to turn out with Nebuchadnezzar to graze, as to be transformed into one of that ‘swinish multitude.’ There is no point of affinity. The extrinsic circumstances are imposing : but, within, there is nothing but morbid humours and proud flesh ! Some persons might vote for Charlemagne ; and there are others who would have no objection to be the modern Charlemagne, with all he inflicted and suffered, even after the necromantic field of Waterloo, and the bloody wreath on the vacant brow of his conqueror, and that fell jailer set over him by a craven foe, that ‘glared round his soul, and mocked his closing eyelids !’

It has been remarked, that could we at pleasure change our situation in life, more persons would be found anxious to descend than to ascend in the scale of society. One reason may be, that we have it more in our power to do so ; and this encourages the thought, and makes it familiar to us. A second is, that we naturally wish to throw off the cares of state, of fortune or business, that oppress us, and to seek repose before we find it in the grave. A third reason is, that, as we descend to common life, the pleasures are simple, natural, such as all can enter into, and therefore excite a general interest, and combine all suffrages. Of the different occupations of life, none is beheld with a more pleasing emotion, or less aversion to a change of our own, than that of a shepherd tending his flock : the pastoral ages have been the envy and the theme of all succeeding ones ; and a beggar with his crutch is more closely allied than the monarch and his crown to the associations of mirth and heart’s-ease. On the other hand, it must be admitted that our pride is too apt to prefer grandeur to happiness ; and that our passions make us envy great vices oftener than great virtues.

The world shew their sense in nothing more than in a distrust and aversion to those changes of situation which only tend to make the successful candidates ridiculous, and which do not carry along with them a mind adequate to the circumstances. The common people, in this respect, are more shrewd and judicious than their superiors, from feeling their own awkwardness and incapacity, and often decline, with an instinctive modesty, the troublesome honours intended for them. They do not overlook their original defects so readily as others overlook their acquired advantages. It is wonderful, therefore, that

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opera-singers and dancers refuse, or only *condescend* as it were, to accept lords, though the latter are so often fascinated by them. The fair performer knows (better than her unsuspecting admirer) how little connection there is between the dazzling figure she makes on the stage and that which she may make in private life, and is in no hurry to convert 'the drawing-room into a Green-room.' The nobleman (supposing him not to be very wise) is astonished at the miraculous powers of art in

'The fair, the chaste, the inexpressive *she* ;'

and thinks such a paragon must easily conform to the routine of manners and society which every trifling woman of quality of his acquaintance, from sixteen to sixty, goes through without effort. This is a hasty or a wilful conclusion. Things of habit only come by habit, and inspiration here avails nothing. A man of fortune who marries an actress for her fine performance of tragedy, has been well compared to the person who bought Punch. The lady is not unfrequently aware of the inconsequentiality, and unwilling to be put on the shelf, and hid in the nursery of some musty country-mansion. Servant girls, of any sense and spirit, treat their masters (who make serious love to them) with suitable contempt. What is it but a proposal to drag an unmeaning trollop at his heels through life, to her own annoyance and the ridicule of all his friends? No woman, I suspect, ever forgave a man who raised her from a low condition in life (it is a perpetual obligation and reproach); though, I believe men often feel the most disinterested regard for women under such circumstances. Sancho Panza discovered no less folly in his eagerness to enter upon his new government, than wisdom in quitting it as fast as possible. Why will Mr. Cobbett persist in getting into Parliament? He would find himself no longer the same man. What member of Parliament, I should like to know, could write his Register? As a popular partisan, he may (for aught I can say) be a match for the whole Honourable House; but, by obtaining a seat in St. Stephen's Chapel, he would only be equal to a 576th part of it. It was surely a puerile ambition in Mr. Addington to succeed Mr. Pitt as prime-minister. The situation was only a foil to his imbecility. Gipsies have a fine faculty of evasion: catch them who can in the same place or story twice! Take them; teach them the comforts of civilisation; confine them in warm rooms, with thick carpets and down beds; and they will fly out of the window—like the bird, described by Chaucer, out of its golden cage. I maintain that there is no common language or medium of understanding between people of education and without it—between those who



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judge of things from books or from their senses. Ignorance has so far the advantage over learning; for it can make an appeal to you from what you know; but you cannot re-act upon it through that which it is a perfect stranger to. Ignorance is, therefore, power. This is what foiled Buonaparte in Spain and Russia. The people can only be gained over by informing them, though they may be enslaved by fraud or force. You say there is a common language in nature. They see nature through their wants, while you look at it for your pleasure. Ask a country lad if he does not like to hear the birds sing in the spring? And he will laugh in your face. 'What is it, then, he does like?'—'Good victuals and drink!' As if you had not these too; but because he has them not, he thinks of nothing else, and laughs at you and your refinements, supposing you to live upon air. To those who are deprived of every other advantage, even nature is a *book sealed*. I have made this capital mistake all my life, in imagining that those objects which lay open to all, and excited an interest merely from the *idea* of them, spoke a common language to all; and that nature was a kind of universal home, where all ages, sexes, classes met. Not so. The vital air, the sky, the woods, the streams—all these go for nothing, except with a favoured few. The poor are taken up with their bodily wants—the rich, with external acquisitions: the one, with the sense of property—the other, of its privation. Both have the same distaste for *sentiment*. The *genteel* are the slaves of appearances—the vulgar, of necessity; and neither has the smallest regard to true worth, refinement, generosity. All savages are irreclaimable. I can understand the Irish character better than the Scotch. I hate the formal crust of circumstances and the mechanism of society. I have been recommended, indeed, to settle down into some respectable profession for life:—

'Ah! why so soon the blossom tear?

I am 'in no haste to be venerable!'

In thinking of those one might wish to have been, many people will exclaim, 'Surely, you would like to have been Shakespear?' Would Garrick have consented to the change? No, nor should he; for the applause which he received, and on which he lived, was more adapted to his genius and taste. If Garrick had agreed to be Shakespear, he would have made it a previous condition that he was to be a better player. He would have insisted on taking some higher part than *Polonius* or the *Grave-digger*. Ben Jonson and his companions at the Mermaid would not have known their old friend Will in his new disguise. The modern Roscius would have scouted

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the halting player. He would have shrunk from the parts of the inspired poet. If others were unlike us, we feel it as a presumption and an impertinence to usurp their place; if they were like us, it seems a work of supererogation. We are not to be cozened out of our existence for nothing. It has been ingeniously urged, as an objection to having been Milton, that 'then we should not have had the pleasure of reading *Paradise Lost*.' Perhaps I should incline to draw lots with Pope, but that he was deformed, and did not sufficiently relish Milton and Shakespear. As it is, we can enjoy his verses and theirs too. Why, having these, need we ever be dissatisfied with ourselves? Goldsmith is a person whom I considerably affect, notwithstanding his blunders and his misfortunes. The author of the *Vicar of Wakefield*, and of *Retaliation*, is one whose temper must have had something eminently amiable, delightful, gay, and happy in it.

'A certain tender bloom his fame o'erspreads.'

But then I could never make up my mind to his preferring Rowe and Dryden to the worthies of the Elizabethan age; nor could I, in like manner, forgive Sir Joshua—whom I number among those whose existence was marked with a *white stone*, and on whose tomb might be inscribed 'Thrice Fortunate!'—his treating Nicholas Poussin with contempt. Differences in matters of taste and opinion are points of honour—'stuff o' the conscience'—stumbling-blocks not to be got over. Others, we easily grant, may have more wit, learning, imagination, riches, strength, beauty, which we should be glad to borrow of them; but that they have sounder or better views of things, or that we should act wisely in changing in this respect, is what we can by no means persuade ourselves. We may not be the lucky possessors of what is best or most desirable; but our notion of what is best and most desirable we will give up to no man by choice or compulsion; and unless others (the greatest wits or brightest geniuses) can come into our way of thinking, we must humbly beg leave to remain as we are. A Calvinistic preacher would not relinquish a single point of faith to be the Pope of Rome; nor would a strict Unitarian acknowledge the mystery of the Holy Trinity to have painted Raphael's *Assembly of the Just*. In the range of *ideal* excellence, we are distracted by variety and repelled by differences: the imagination is fickle and fastidious, and requires a combination of all possible qualifications, which never meet. Habit alone is blind and tenacious of the most homely advantages; and after running the tempting round of nature, fame, and fortune, we wrap

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ourselves up in our familiar recollections and humble pretensions—as the lark, after long fluttering on sunny wing, sinks into its lowly bed !

We can have no very importunate craving, nor very great confidence, in wishing to change characters, except with those with whom we are intimately acquainted by their works ; and having these by us (which is all we know or covet in them), what would we have more ? We can have *no more of a cat than her skin* ; nor of an author than his brains. By becoming Shakespear in reality, we cut ourselves out of reading Milton, Pope, Dryden, and a thousand more—all of whom we have in our possession, enjoy, and *are*, by turns, in the best part of them, their thoughts, without any metamorphosis or miracle at all. What a microcosm is ours ! What a Proteus is the human mind ! All that we know, think of, or can admire, in a manner becomes ourselves. We are not (the meanest of us) a volume, but a whole library ! In this calculation of problematical contingencies, the lapse of time makes no difference. One would as soon have been Raphael as any modern artist. Twenty, thirty, or forty years of elegant enjoyment and lofty feeling were as great a luxury in the fifteenth as in the nineteenth century. But Raphael did not live to see Claude, nor Titian Rembrandt. Those who found arts and sciences are not witnesses of their accumulated results and benefits ; nor in general do they reap the meed of praise which is their due. We who come after in some ‘laggard age,’ have more enjoyment of their fame than they had. Who would have missed the sight of the Louvre in all its glory to have been one of those whose works enriched it ? Would it not have been giving a certain good for an uncertain advantage ? No : I am as sure (if it is not presumption to say so) of what passed through Raphael’s mind as of what passes through my own ; and I know the difference between seeing (though even that is a rare privilege) and producing such perfection. At one time I was so devoted to Rembrandt, that I think, if the Prince of Darkness had made me the offer in some rash mood, I should have been tempted to close with it, and should have become (in happy hour, and in downright earnest) the great master of light and shade !

I have run myself out of my materials for this Essay, and want a well-turned sentence or two to conclude with ; like Benvenuto Cellini, who complains that, with all the brass, tin, iron, and lead he could muster in the house, his statue of Perseus was left imperfect, with a dent in the heel of it. Once more then—I believe there is one character that all the world would be glad to change with—which is that of a favoured rival. Even hatred gives way to envy. We would be any thing—a toad in a dungeon—to live upon her smile, which is our all of earthly hope and happiness ; nor can we, in

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our infatuation, conceive that there is any difference of feeling on the subject, or that the pressure of her hand is not in itself divine, making those to whom such bliss is deigned like the Immortal Gods !

### ESSAY XXVI

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' Search then the ruling passion : there, alone,  
The wild are constant, and the cunning known ;  
The fool consistent, and the false sincere ;  
Priests, princes, women, no dissemblers here.  
This clue once found unravels all the rest,  
The prospect clears, and Wharton stands confest.'

POPE.

I AM one of those who do not think that mankind are exactly governed by reason or a cool calculation of consequences. I rather believe that habit, imagination, sense, passion, prejudice, words make a strong and frequent diversion from the right line of prudence and wisdom. I have been told, however, that these are merely the irregularities and exceptions, and that reason forms the rule or basis ; that the understanding, instead of being the sport of the capricious and arbitrary decisions of the will, generally dictates the line of conduct it is to pursue, and that self-interest, or the *main-chance*, is the unvarying load-star of our affections, or the chief ingredient in all our motives, that, thrown in as ballast, gives steadiness and direction to our voyage through life. I will not take upon me to give a verdict in this cause as judge ; but I will try to plead one side of it as an advocate, perhaps a biassed and feeble one.

As the passions are said to be subject to the control of reason, and as reason is resolved (in the present case) into an attention to our own interest, or a practical sense of the value of money, it will not be amiss to inquire how much of this principle itself is founded in a rational estimate of things, or is calculated for the end it proposes, or how much of it will turn out (when analysed) to be mere madness and folly or a mixture, like all the rest, of obstinacy, whim, fancy, vanity, ill-nature, and so forth, or a nominal pursuit of good. This passion, or an inordinate love of wealth, shows itself, when it is strong, equally in two opposite ways, in saving or in spending—in avarice (or stinginess) and in extravagance. To examine each of their order. That lowest and most familiar form of covetousness, commonly called *stinginess*, is at present (it must be owned) greatly on the wane in

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civilised society ; it has been driven out of fashion either by ridicule and good sense, or by the spread of luxury, or by supplying the mind with other sources of interest, besides those which related to the bare means of subsistence, so that it may almost be considered as a vice, or absurdity, struck off the list, as a set-off to some that, in the change of manners and the progress of dissipation, have been brought upon the stage. It is not, however, so entirely banished from the world, but that examples of it may be found to our purpose. It seems to have taken refuge in the petty provincial towns, or in old baronial castles in the North of Scotland, where it is still triumphant. To go into this subject somewhat in detail, as a study of the surviving manners of the last age.—Nothing is more common in these half-starved, barren regions, than to stint the servants in their wages, to allowance them in the merest necessities, never to indulge them with a morsel of savoury food, and to lock up every thing from them as if they were thieves, or common vagabonds, broke into the house. The natural consequence is, that the mistresses live in continual *hot-water* with their servants, keep watch and ward over them—the pantry is in a state of siege—grudge them every mouthful, every appearance of comfort, or moment of leisure, and torment their own souls every minute of their lives about what, if left wholly to itself, would not make a difference of five shillings at the year's end. There are families so notorious for this kind of *surveillance* and meanness, that no servant will go to live with them ; for, to clench the matter, they are obliged to stay if they do ; as, under these amiable establishments, and to provide against an evasion of their signal advantages, domestics are never hired but by the half-year. Instances have been known where servants have taken a pleasant revenge on their masters and mistresses without intending it ; but where the example of sordid saving and meanness set to them, having taken possession of those even who were victims to it, they have conscientiously applied it to the benefit of all parties, and scarcely suffered a thing to enter the house for the whole six months they stayed in it. To pass over, however, those cases which may plead poverty as their excuse, what shall we say to a lady of fortune (the sister of one of their old-fashioned lairds) allowing the fruit to rot in the gardens and hot-houses of a fine old mansion in large quantities, sooner than let any of it be given away in presents to the neighbours ; and, when peremptorily ordered by the master of the house to send a basket-full every morning to a sick friend, purchasing a small pottle for the purpose, and satisfying her mind (an intelligent and well-informed one) with this miserable subterfuge ? Nay, farther, the same person, whenever they had green-peas, or other rarities, served up at table, could hardly be

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prevailed on to help the guests to them, but, if possible, sent them away, though no other use could now be made of them, and she would never see them again ! Is there common sense in this ; or is it not more like madness ? But is it not, at the same time, human nature ? Let us stop to explain a little. In my view, the real motive of action in this and other similar cases of grasping penuriousness has no more reference to self-love (properly so called) than artificial fruit and flowers have to natural ones. A certain form or outside appearance of utility may deceive the mind, but the natural, pulpy, wholesome, nutritious substance, the principle of vitality is gone. To this callous, frigid habit of mind, the real uses of things harden and crystallise ; the pith and marrow are extracted out of them, and leave nothing but the husk or shell. By a regular process, the idea of property is gradually abstracted from the advantage it may be of even to ourselves ; and to a well-drilled, thorough-bred, Northern housekeeper (such as I have supposed), the fruits, or other produce of her garden, would come at last to be things no more to be eaten or enjoyed, than her jewels or trinkets of any description, which are, professedly, of no use but to be *kept* as symbols of wealth, to be occasionally looked at, and carefully guarded from the approach of any unhallowed touch. The calculation of consequences, or of benefit to accrue to any living person, is so far from being the main-spring in this mechanical operation that it is never once thought of, or regarded with peevishness and impatience as an unwelcome intruder, because it must naturally divert the mind from the warped and false bias it has taken. The feeling of property is here, then, removed from the sphere of practice to a chimerical and fictitious one. In the case of not sending the fruit out of the house, there might be some lurking idea of its being possibly wanted at home, that it might be sent to some one else, or made up into preserves : but when different articles of food are actually placed on the table, to hang back from using or offering them to others, is a deliberate infatuation. They *must be* destroyed, they *could not* appear again ; and yet this person's heart failed her, and shrank back from the only opportunity of making the proper use of them with a petty, sensitive apprehension, as if it were a kind of sacrilege done to a cherished and favourite object. The impulse to save was become, by indulgence, a sort of desperate propensity and forlorn hope, no longer the understood means, but the mistaken end : habit had completely superseded the exercise and control of reason, and the rage of making the most of every thing *by making no use of it at all*, resisted to the last moment the shocking project of feasting on a helpless dish of green-peas (that *would* fetch so much in the market) as an outrage against the Goddess

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of stinginess, and torture to the soul of thrift ! The principle of economy is inverted ; and in order to avoid the possibility of wasting any thing, the way with such philosophers and housewives is to abstain from touching it altogether. Is not this a common error ? Or are we conscious of our motives in such cases ? Or do we not flatter ourselves by imputing every such act of idle folly to the necessity of adopting some sure and judicious plan to shun ruin, beggary, and the most profligate abuse of wealth ?

Let us turn the tables and look at the other side of this sober, solid, ingrossing passion for property and its appendages. A man lays out a thousand, nay, sometimes many thousand pounds in purchasing a fine picture. This is thought, by the vulgar, a very fantastical folly, and unaccountable waste of money. Why so ? No one would give such a sum for a picture, unless there were others ready to offer nearly the same sum, and who are likely to appreciate its value, and envy him the distinction. It is then a sign of taste, a proof of wealth to possess it, it is an ornament and a luxury. If the same person lays out the same sum of money in building or purchasing a fine house, or enriching it with costly furniture, no notice is taken —this is supposed to be perfectly natural and in order. Yet both are equally gratuitous pieces of extravagance, and the value of the objects is, in either case, equally *ideal*. It will be asked, ‘ But what is the use of the picture ? ’ And what, pray, is the use of the fine house or costly furniture, unless to be looked at, to be admired, and to display the taste and magnificence of the owner ? Are not pictures and statues as much furniture as gold plate or jasper tables ; or does the circumstance of the former having a meaning in them, and appealing to the imagination as well as to the senses, neutralise their virtue, and render it entirely chimerical and visionary ? It is true, every one must have a house of some kind, furnished somehow, and the superfluity so far grows imperceptibly out of the necessary. But a fine house, fine furniture, is necessary to no man, nor of more value than the plainest, except as a matter of taste, of fancy, of luxury and ostentation. Again, no doubt, if a person is in the habit of keeping a number of servants, and entertaining a succession of fashionable guests, he must have more room than he wants for himself, apartments suitably decorated to receive them, and offices and stables for their horses and retinue. But is all this unavoidably dictated as a consequence of his attention to the *main-chance*, or is it not sacrificing the latter, and making it a stalking-horse to his vanity, dissipation, or love of society and hospitality ? We are at least as fond of spending money as of making it. If a man runs through a fortune in the way here spoken of, is it out of love to himself ? Yet who scruples to

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run through a fortune in this way, or accuses himself of any extraordinary disinterestedness or love of others? One bed is as much as any one can sleep in, one room is as much as he can dine in, and he may have another for study or to retire to after dinner—but he can only want more than this for the accommodation of his friends or the admiration of strangers. At Fonthill Abbey (to take an extreme illustration), there was not a single room fit to sit, lie, or stand in: the whole was cut up into pigeon holes, or spread out into long endless galleries. The building this huge, ill-assorted pile cost, I believe, nearly a million of money; and if the circumstance was mentioned, it occasioned an expression of surprise at the amount of the wealth that had been thus squandered—but if it was said that a hundred pounds had been laid out on a highly-finished picture, there was the same astonishment expressed at its misdirection. The sympathetic auditor makes up his mind to the first and greatest loss, by reflecting that in case of the worst the building materials alone will fetch something considerable; or, in the very idea of stone walls and mortar there is something solid and tangible, that repels the charge of frivolous levity or fine sentiment. This quaint excrescence in architecture, preposterous and ill-contrived as it was, occasioned, I suspect, many a heart-ache and bitter comparison to the throng of fashionable visitants; and I conceive it was the very want of comfort and convenience that enhanced this feeling, by magnifying, as it were from contrast, the expense that had been incurred in realising an idle whim. When we judge thus perversely and invidiously of the employment of wealth by others, I cannot think that we are guided in our own choice of means to ends by a simple calculation of downright use and personal accommodation. The gentleman who purchased Fonthill, and was supposed to be possessed of wealth enough to purchase half a dozen more Fonthills, lived there himself for some time in a state of the greatest retirement, rose at six and read till four, rode out for an hour for the benefit of the air, and dined abstemiously for the sake of his health. I could do all this myself. What then became of the rest of his fortune? It was lying in the funds, or embarked in business to make it yet greater, that he might still rise at six and read till four, &c.—it was of no other earthly use to him; for he did not wish to make a figure in the world, or to throw it away on studs of horses, on equipages, entertainments, gaming, electioneering, subscriptions to charitable institutions, or any of the usual fashionable modes of squandering wealth for the amusement and wonder of others and our own fancied enjoyment. Mr. F. did not probably lay out five hundred a-year on himself: it cost Mr. Beckford, who led a life of perfect seclusion,



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twenty thousand a-year to defray the expenses of his table and of his household establishment. When I find that such and so various are the tastes of men, I am a little puzzled to know what is meant by self-interest, of which some persons talk so fluently, as if it was a *Jack-in-a-Box* which they could take out and show you, and which they tell you is the object that all men equally aim at. If money, is it for its own sake or the sake of other things? Is it to hoard it or to spend it, on ourselves or others? In all these points, we find the utmost diversity and contradiction both of feeling and practice. Certainly, he who puts his money into a strong-box, and he who puts it into a dice-box, must be allowed to have a very different idea of the *main-chance*. If by this phrase be understood a principle of self-preservation, I grant that while we live, we must not starve, and that *necessity has no law*. Beyond this point, all seems nearly left to chance or whim; and so far are all the world from being agreed in their definition of this redoubtable term, that one half of them may be said to think and act in diametrical opposition to the other.

Avarice is the miser's dream, as fame is the poet's. A calculation of physical profit or loss is almost as much out of the question in the one case as in the other. The one has set his mind on gold, the other on praise, as the *summum bonum* or object of his bigoted idolatry and darling contemplation, not for any private and sinister ends. It is the immediate pursuit, not the remote or reflex consequence that gives wings to the passion. There is, indeed, a reference to self in either case that fixes and concentrates it, but not a gross or sordid one. Is not the desire to accumulate and leave a vast estate behind us equally romantic with the desire to leave a posthumous name behind us? Is not the desire of distinction, of something to be known and remembered by, the paramount consideration? And are not the privations we undergo, the sacrifices and exertions we make for either object, nearly akin? A child makes a huge snow-ball to show his skill and perseverance and as something to wonder at, not that he can swallow it as an ice, or warm his hands at it, and though the next day's sun will dissolve it; and the man accumulates a pile of wealth for the same reason principally, or to find employment for his time, his imagination, and his will. I deny that it can be of any other use to him to watch and superintend the returns of millions, than to watch the returns of the heavenly bodies, or to calculate their distances, or to contemplate eternity, or infinity, or the sea, or the dome of St. Peter's, or any other object that excites curiosity and interest from its magnitude and importance. Do we not look at the most barren mountain with thrilling awe and wonder? And is it strange that we should gaze at a mountain of gold with satisfaction, when we can

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besides say, 'This is ours, with all the power that belongs to it' ? Every passion, however plodding and prosaic, has its poetical side to it. A miser is the true alchemist, or, like the magician in his cell, who overlooks a mighty experiment, who sees dazzling visions, and who wields the will of others at his nod ; but to whom all other hopes and pleasures are dead, and who is cut off from all connexion with his kind. He lives in a splendid hallucination, a waking trance, and so far it is well : but if he thinks he has any other need or use for all this endless store (any more than to swell the ocean), he deceives himself, and is no conjuror after all. He goes on, however, mechanically adding to his stock, and fancying that great riches is great gain, that every particle that swells the heap is something in reserve against the evil day, and a defence against that poverty which he dreads more, the farther he is removed from it ; as the more giddy the height to which we have attained, the more frightful does the gulph yawn below—so easily does habit get the mastery of reason, and so nearly is passion allied to madness ! ' But he is laying up for his heirs and successors.' In toiling for them, and sacrificing himself, is he properly attending to the *main-chance* ?

This is the turn the love of money takes in cautious, dry, recluse, and speculative minds. If it were the pure and abstract love of money, it could take no other turn but this. But in a different class of characters, the sociable, the vain, and imaginative, it takes just the contrary one, *viz.* to expense, extravagance, and ostentation. It then loves to display itself in every fantastic shape and with every reflected lustre, in houses, in equipage, in dress, in a retinue of friends and dependants, in horses, in hounds—to glitter in the eye of fashion, to be echoed by the roar of folly, and buoyed up for a while like a bubble on the surface of vanity, to sink all at once and irrecoverably into an abyss of ruin and bankruptcy. Does it foresee this result ? Does it care for it ? What then becomes of the calculating principle that can neither be hood-winked nor bribed from its duty ? Does it do nothing for us in this critical emergency ? It is blind, deaf, and insensible to all but the noise, confusion, and glare of objects by which it is fascinated and lulled into a fatal repose ! One man ruins himself by the vanity of associating with lords, another by his love of low company, one by his fondness for building, another by his rage for keeping open house and private theatricals, one by philosophical experiments, another by embarking in every ticklish and fantastic speculation that is proposed to him, one throws away an estate on a law-suit, another on a die, a third on a horse-race, a fourth on *virtù*, a fifth on a drab, a sixth on a contested election, &c. There is no dearth of instances to fill the page, or complete

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the group of profound calculators and inflexible martyrs to the *main-chance*. Let any of these discreet and well-advised persons have the veil torn from their darling follies by experience, and be gifted with a double share of wisdom and a second fortune to dispose of, and each of them, so far from being warned by experience or disaster, will only be the more resolutely bent to assert the independence of his choice, and throw it away the self-same road it went before, on his vanity in associating with lords, on his love of low company, on his fondness for building, on his rage for keeping open house or private theatricals, on philosophical experiments, on fantastic speculations, on a law-suit, on a dice-box, on a favourite horse, on a picture, on a mistress, or election contest, and so on, through the whole of the chapter of accidents and cross-purposes. There is an admirable description of this sort of infatuation with folly and ruin in Madame D'Arblay's account of Harrel in 'Cecilia'; and though the picture is highly wrought and carried to the utmost length, yet I maintain that the principle is common. I myself have known more than one individual in the same predicament; and therefore cannot think that the deviations from the line of strict prudence and wisdom are so rare or trifling as the theory I am opposing represents them, or I must have been singularly unfortunate in my acquaintance. Out of a score of persons of this class I could mention several that have ruined their fortunes out of mere freak, others that are in a state of dotage and imbecility for fear of being robbed of all they are worth. The rest care nothing about the matter. So that this boasted and unflinching attention to the *main-chance* resolves itself, when strong, into mad profusion or griping penury, or if weak, is null and yields to other motives. Such is the conclusion, to which my observation of life has led me: if I am quite wrong, it is hard that in a world abounding in such characters I should not have met with a single practical philosopher.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Bentham proposes to new-model the penal code, on the principle of a cool and systematic calculation of consequences. Yet of all philosophers, the candidates for Panopticons and Penitentiaries are the most short-sighted and refractory. Punishment has scarcely any effect upon them. Thieves steal under the scaffold; and if a person's previous feelings and habits do not prevent his running the risk of the gallows, assuredly the fear of consequences, or his having already escaped it, with all the good resolutions he may have made on the occasion, will not prevent his exposing himself to it a second time. It is true, most people have a natural aversion to being hanged. The perseverance of culprits in their evil courses seems a fatality, which is strengthened by the prospect of what is to follow. Mr. Bentham argues that all 'men act from calculation, even madmen reason.' So far it may be true that the world is not unlike a great Bedlam, or answers to the title of an old play—'A Mad World, my masters!' This is our world, but not his. Life, on looking back to it, too often resembles a disturbed dream, which does not infer its having been guided by reason in its progress.

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A girl in a country-town resolves never to marry any one under a duke or a lord. Good. This may be very well as an ebullition of spleen or vanity; but is there much common sense or regard to her own satisfaction in it? Were there any likelihood of her succeeding in her resolution, she would not make it: for it is the very distinction to be attained that piques her ambition, and leads her to gratify her conceit of herself by affecting to look down on any lower matches. Let her suffer ever so much mortification or chagrin in the prosecution of her scheme, it only confirms her the more in it: the spirit of contradiction, and the shame of owning herself defeated, increase with every new disappointment and year of painful probation. At least this is the case while there is any chance left. But what, after all, is this haughty and ridiculous pretension founded on? Is it owing to a more commanding view and a firmer grasp of consequences, or of her own interest? No such thing: she is as much captivated by the fancied sound of 'my lady,' and dazzled by the image of a coronet-coach, as the girl who marries a footman is smit with his broad shoulders, laced coat, and rosy cheeks. 'But why must I be always in extremes? Few misses make vows of celibacy or marry their footmen.' Take then the broad question:—Do they generally marry from the convictions of the understanding, or make the choice that is most likely to ensure their future happiness, or that they themselves approve afterwards? I think the answer must be in the negative; and yet love and marriage are among the weightiest and most serious concerns of life. Mutual regard, good temper, good sense, good character, or a conformity of tastes and dispositions, have notoriously and lamentably little to say in it. On the contrary, it is most frequently those things that pique and provoke opposition, instead of those which promise concord and sympathy, that decide the choice and inflame the will by the love of conquest or of overcoming difficulty. Or it is a complexion, or a fine set of teeth, or air, or dress, or a fine person, or false calves, or affected consequence, or a reputation for gallantry, or a flow of spirits, or a flow of words, or forward coquetry, or assumed indifference, something that appeals to the senses, the fancy, or to our pride, and determines us to throw away our happiness for life. Neither in this case, on which so much depends, are the *main-chance* and our real interest by any means the same thing.

'Now all ye ladies of fair Scotland,  
And ladies of England that happy would prove,  
Marry never for houses, nor marry for land,  
Nor marry for nothing but only love.'—*Old Ballad.*

Or take the passion of love where it has other objects and con-

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sequences in view. Is reason any match for the poison of this passion, where it has been once imbibed? I might just as well be told that reason is a cure for madness or the bite of a venomous serpent. Are not health, fortune, friends, character, peace of mind, every thing sacrificed to its idlest impulse? Are the instances rare, or are they not common and tragical? The *main-chance* does not serve the turn here. Does the prospect of certain ruin break the fascination to its frail victim, or does it not rather enhance and precipitate the result? Or does it not render the conquest more easy and secure that the seducer has already triumphed over and deserted a hundred other victims? A man *à bonnes fortunes* is the most irresistible personage in the lists of gallantry. Take drunkenness again, that vice which till within these few years (and even still) was fatal to the health, the constitution, the fortunes of so many individuals, and the peace of so many families in Great Britain. I would ask what remonstrance of friends, what lessons of experience, what resolutions of amendment, what certainty of remorse and suffering, however exquisite, would deter the confirmed sot (where the passion for this kind of excitement had once become habitual and the immediate want of it was felt) from indulging his propensity and taking his full swing, notwithstanding the severe and imminent punishment to follow upon his incorrigible excess? The consequence of not abstaining from his favourite beverage is not doubtful and distant (a thing in the clouds) but close at his side, staring him in the face, and felt perhaps in all its aggravations the very morning, yet the recollection of this and of the next day's dawn is of no avail against the momentary craving and headlong impulse given by the first application of the glass to his lips. The present temptation is indeed heightened by the threatened alternative. I know this as a rule, that the stronger the repentance, the surer the relapse and the more hopeless the cure! The being ingrossed by the present moment, by the present feeling, whatever it be, whether of pleasure or pain, is the evident cause of both. Few instances have been heard of, of a final reformation on this head. Yet it is a clear case; and reason, if it were that Giant that it is represented in any thing but ledgers and books of accounts, would put down the abuse in an instant. It is true, this infirmity is more particularly chargeable to the English and to other Northern nations, and there has been a considerable improvement among us of late years; but I suspect it is owing to a change of manners, and to the opening of new sources of amusement (without the aid of ardent spirits flung in to relieve the depression of our animal spirits,) more than to the excellent treatises which have been written against the 'Use of Fermented Liquors,' or to an increasing,

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tender regard to our own comfort, health, and happiness in the breast of individuals. We still find plenty of ways of tormenting ourselves and sporting with the feelings of others! I will say nothing of a passion for gaming here, as too obvious an illustration of what I mean. It is more rare, and hardly to be looked on as epidemic with us. But few that have dabbled in this vice have not become deeply involved, and few (or none) that have done so have ever retraced their steps or returned to sober calculations of the *main-chance*. The majority, it is true, are not gamesters; but where the passion does exist, it completely tyrannises over and stifles the voice of common sense, reason, and humanity. How many victims has the point of honour! I will not pretend that, as matters stand, it may not be necessary to fight a duel, under certain circumstances and on certain provocations, even in a prudential point of view, (though this again proves how little the maxims and practices of the world are regulated by a mere consideration of personal safety and welfare)—but I do say that the rashness with which this responsibility is often incurred, and the even seeking for trifling causes of quarrel, shows any thing but a consistent regard to self-interest as a general principle of action, or rather betrays a total recklessness of consequences, when opposed to pique, petulance, or passion.

Before I proceed to answer a principal objection (and indeed a staggering one at first sight) I will mention here that I think it strongly confirms my view of human nature, that men form their opinions much more from prejudice than reason. The proof that they do so is that they form such opposite ones, when the abstract premises and independent evidence are the same. How few Calvinists become Lutherans! How few Papists Protestants! How few Tories Whigs!<sup>1</sup> Each shuts his eyes equally to facts or arguments, and persists in the view of the subject that custom, pride, and obstinacy dictate. Interest is no more regarded than reason; for it is often at the risk both of life and fortune that these opinions have been maintained, and it is uniformly when parties have run highest and the strife has been deadliest that people have been most forward to stake their existence and every thing belonging to them, on some unintelligible dogma or article of an old-fashioned creed. Half the wars and fightings, martyrdoms, persecutions, feuds, antipathies, heart-burnings in the world have been about some distinction, 'some trick not worth an egg'—so ready are mankind to sacrifice their all to a mere name! It may be urged, that the good of our souls or our

<sup>1</sup> *Certes* more Whigs become Tories. This may also be accounted for satisfactorily, though not very rationally.

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welfare in a future state of being is a rational and well-grounded motive for these religious extravagances. And this is true, so far as religious zeal falls in with men's passions or the spirit of the times. A bigot was formerly ready to cut his neighbour's throat to go to Heaven, but not so ready to reform his own life, or give up a single vice or gratification, for all the pains and penalties denounced upon it, and of which his faith in Holy Church did not suffer him to doubt a moment !

But it is contended here, that in matters not of doctrinal speculation but of private life and domestic policy, every one consults and understands his own interest ; that whatever other *hobbies* he may have, he minds this as the main-object, and contrives to make both ends meet, in spite of seeming inattention and real difficulties. ' If we look around us ' (says a shrewd, hard-headed Scotchman) ' and take examples from the neighbourhood in which we live, we shall find that allowing for occasional exceptions, diversities and singularities, the *main-chance* is still stuck to with rigid and unabated pertinacity—the accounts are wound up and every thing is right at the year's end, whatever freaks or fancies may have intervened in the course of it. The business of life goes on (which is the principal thing) and every man's house stands on its own bottom. This is the case in Nicholson-street, in the next street to it, and in the next street to that, and in the whole of Edinburgh, Scotland, and England to boot.' This, I allow, is a *home-thrust*, and I must parry it, how I can. It is a kind of heavy, broad-wheeled waggon of an objection that makes a formidable, awkward appearance, and takes up so much of the road, that I shall have a lucky escape if I can dash by it in my light travelling gig without being upset or crushed to atoms. The persons who in the present instance have the charge of it, in its progress through the streets of Edinburgh, are a constitutional lawyer, a political economist, an opposition editor, and an *ex-officio* surveyor of the Customs—fearful odds against one poor metaphysician ! Their machine of human life, I confess, puts me a little in mind of those square-looking caravans one sometimes meets on the road in which they transport wild beasts from place to place ; and dull, heavy, safe, and flat as they look, the inmates continue their old habits, the monkeys play their tricks, and the panthers lick their jaws for human blood, though cramped and confined in their excursions. So the vices and follies, when they cannot break loose, do their worst *inside* this formal conveyance, the *main-chance*. As this ovation is to pass up High-street, for the honour of the Scottish capital, I should wish it to stop at the shop-door of Mr. Bartholine Saddletree, to see if he is at home or in the courts. Also, to inquire whether the suit of Peter

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Peebles is yet ended ; and to take the opinion of counsel, how many of the Highland lairds or Scottish noblemen and gentlemen that were *out* in the fifteen and the forty-five, perilled their lives and fortunes in the good cause from an eye to the *main-chance*? The Baron of Bradwardine would have scorned such a suggestion ; nay, it would have been below Balmawhapple or even Killancureit. But 'the age of chivalry is gone, and that of sophists, economists, and calculators has succeeded.' I should say that the risk, the secrecy, the possibility of the leaders having their heads stuck on Temple-Bar, and their estates confiscated, were among the foremost causes that inflamed their zeal and stirred their blood to the enterprise. Hardship, danger, exile, death,—these words 'smack of honour,' more than the *main-chance*. The modern Scotch may be loyal on this thriving principle : their ancestors found *their* loyalty a very losing concern. Yet they persevered in it till and long after it became a desperate cause. But patriotism and loyalty (true or false) are important and powerful principles in human affairs, though not always selfish and calculating. Honour is one great standard-bearer and puissant leader in the struggle of human life ; and less than honour (a nickname or a bugbear) is enough to set the multitude together by the ears, whether in civil, religious, or private brawls. The fault of reason in general, (which takes in the *whole* instead of *parts*,) is that objects, though of the utmost extent and importance, are not defined and tangible. This fault cannot be found with the pursuit of trade and commerce. It is not a mere dry, abstract, undefined, speculative, however steady and well-founded conviction of the understanding. It has other levers and pulleys to enforce it, besides those of reason and reflection. As follows:—

1. The value of money is positive or specific. The interest in it is a sort of mathematical interest, reducible to number and quantity. Ten is always more than one ; a part is never greater than the whole ; the good we seek or attain in this way has a technical denomination, and I do not deny that in matters of strict calculation, the principle of calculation will naturally bear great sway. The returns of profit and loss are regular and mechanical, and the operations of business, or the *main-chance*, are so too. But, commonly speaking, we judge by the *degree* of excitement, not by the ultimate quantity. Thus we prefer a draught of nectar to the recovery of our health. Yet there is a point at which self-will and humour stop. A man will take brandy, which is a *kind of slow poison*, but he will not take *actual* poison, knowing it to be such, however slow the operation or bewitching the taste ; because here the effect is absolutely fixed and certain, not variable, nor in the power of the imagination to elude or



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trifle with it. I see no courage in battle, but in going on what is called the *forlorn hope*.

2. Business is also an affair of habit: it calls for incessant and daily application; and what was at first a matter of necessity to supply our wants, becomes often a matter of necessity to employ our time. The man of business wants work for his head; the labourer and mechanic for his hands; so that the love of action, of difficulty and competition, the stimulus of success or failure, is perhaps as strong an ingredient in men's ordinary pursuits as the love of gain. We find persons pursuing science, or any *hobby-horsical* whim or handicraft that they have taken a fancy to, or persevering in a losing concern, with just the same ardour and obstinacy. As to the choice of a pursuit in life, a man may not be forward to engage in business, but being once in, does not like to turn back amidst the pity of friends and the derision of enemies. How difficult is it to prevent those who have a turn for any art or science from going into these unprofitable pursuits! Nay, how difficult is it often to prevent those who have no turn that way, but prefer starving to a certain income! If there is one in a family brighter than the rest, he is immediately designed for one of the learned professions. Really, the dull and plodding people of the world have not much reason to boast of their superior wisdom or numbers: they are in an involuntary majority!

3. The value of money is an *exchangeable* value: that is, this pursuit is available towards and convertible into a great many others. A person is in want of money, and mortgages an estate, to throw it away upon a round of entertainments and company. The passion or motive here is not a hankering after money, but society, and the individual will ruin himself for this object. Another, who has the same passion for show and a certain style of living, tries to gain a fortune in trade to indulge it, and only goes to work in a more round-about way. I remember a story of a common mechanic at Manchester, who laid out the hard-earned savings of the week in hiring a horse and livery-servant to ride behind him to Stockport every Sunday, and to dine there at an ordinary like a gentleman. The pains bestowed upon the *main-chance* here was only a cover for another object, which exercised a ridiculous predominance over his mind. Money will purchase a horse, a house, a picture, leisure, dissipation, or whatever the individual has a fancy for that is to be purchased; but it does not follow that he is fond of all these, or of whatever will promote his real interest, because he is fond of money, but that he has a passion for some one of these objects, to which he would probably sacrifice all the rest, and his own peace and happiness into the bargain.

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4. The *main-chance* is an instrument of various passions, but is directly opposed to none of them, with the single exception of indolence or the *vis inertiae*, which of itself is seldom strong enough to master it, without the aid of some other incitement. A barrister sticks to his duty as long as he has only his love of ease to prevent; but he flings up his briefs, or neglects them, if he thinks he can make a figure in Parliament. No one flings away the *main-chance* without a motive, any more than he voluntarily walks into the fire or breaks his neck out of window. A man must live; the first step is a point of necessity: every man would live well; the second is a point of luxury. The having, or even acquiring wealth does not prevent our enjoying it in various ways. A man may give his mornings to business, and his evenings to pleasure. There is no contradiction; nor does he sacrifice his ruling passion by this, any more than the man of letters by study, or the soldier by an attention to discipline. Reason and passion are opposed, not passion and business. The sot, the glutton, the debauchee, the gamester, must all have money, to make their own use of it, and they may indulge all these passions and their avarice at the same time. It is only when the last becomes the ruling passion that it puts a prohibition on the others. In that case, every thing else is lost sight of; but it is seldom carried to this length, or when it is, it is far from being another name, either in its means or ends, for reason, sense, or happiness, as I have already shown.

I have taken no notice hitherto of ambition or virtue, or scarcely of the pursuits of fame or intellect. Yet all these are important and respectable divisions of the map of human life. Who ever charged Mr. Pitt with a want of common sense, because he did not die worth a plum? Had it been proposed to Lord Byron to forfeit every penny of his estate, or every particle of his reputation, would he have hesitated to part with the former? Is there not a loss of character, a stain upon honour, that is felt as a severer blow than any reverse of fortune? Do not the richest heiresses in the city marry for a title, and think themselves well off? Are there not patriots who think or dream all their lives about their country's good; philanthropists who rave about liberty and humanity at a certain yearly loss? Are there not studious men, who never once thought of bettering their circumstances? Are not the liberal professions held more respectable than business, though less lucrative? Might not most people do better than they do, but that they postpone their interest to their indolence, their taste for reading, their love of pleasure, or other pursuits? And is it not generally understood that all men can make a fortune or succeed in the *main-chance*, who have but that one idea in their

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heads? <sup>1</sup> Lastly, are there not those who pursue or husband wealth for their own good, for the benefit of their friends or the relief of the distressed? But as the examples are rare, and might be supposed to make against myself, I shall not insist upon them. I think I have said enough to vindicate or apologise for my first position—

‘ Masterless passion sways us to the mood  
Of what it likes or loaths—’

or if not to make good my ground, to march out with flying colours and beat of drum!

### ESSAY XXVII

#### ON KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD

‘ Who shall go about to cozen fortune, or wear the badge of honour without the stamp of merit? ’

A KNOWLEDGE of the world is generally supposed to be the fruit of experience and observation, or of a various, practical acquaintance with men and things. On the contrary, it appears to me to be a kind of instinct, arising out of a peculiar construction and turn of mind. Some persons display this knowledge at their first outset in life: others, with all their opportunities and dear-bought lessons, never acquire it to the end of their career. In fact, a knowledge of the world only means a knowledge of our own interest; it is nothing but a species of selfishness or ramification of the law of self-preservation. There may be said to be two classes of people in the world, which remain for ever distinct: those who consider things in the abstract, or with a reference to the truth, and those who consider them only with a reference to themselves, or to the *main chance*. The first, whatever may be their acquirements or discoveries, wander through life in a sort of absence of mind, or comparative state of sleep-walking: the last, though their attention is riveted to a single point of view, are always on the alert, know perfectly well what they are about, and calculate with the greatest nicety the effect which their words or actions will have on others. They do not trouble themselves about

<sup>1</sup> I have said somewhere, that all professions that do not make money *breed* are careless and extravagant. This is not true of lawyers, &c. I ought to have said that this is the case with all those that by the regularity of their returns do not afford a prospect of realising an independence by frugality and industry.

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the arguments on any subject : they know the opinion entertained on it, and that is enough for them to regulate themselves by ; the rest they regard as quite Utopian, and foreign to the purpose. ‘ Subtle as the fox for prey, like warlike as the wolf for what they eat,’ they leave mere speculative points to those who, from some unaccountable bias or caprice, take an interest in what does not personally concern them, and make good the old saying, that ‘ the children of the world are wiser in their generation than the children of the light !’

The man of the world is to the man of science very much what the chameleon is to the armadillo : the one takes its hue from every surrounding object, and is undistinguishable from them ; the other is shut up in a formal crust of knowledge, and clad in an armour of proof, from which the shaft of ridicule or the edge of disappointment falls equally pointless. It is no uncommon case to see a person come into a room, which he enters awkwardly enough, and has nothing in his dress or appearance to recommend him, but after the first embarrassments are over, sits down, takes his share in the conversation, in which he acquits himself creditably, shews sense, reading, and shrewdness, expresses himself with point, articulates distinctly, when he blunders on some topic which he might see is disagreeable, but persists in it the more as he finds others shrink from it : mentions a book of which you have not heard, and perhaps do not wish to hear, and he therefore thinks himself bound to favour you with the contents ; gets into an argument with one, prosed on with another on a subject in which his hearer has no interest ; and when he goes away, people remark, ‘ What a pity that Mr. — has not more knowledge of the world, and has so little skill in adapting himself to the tone and manners of society !’ But will time and habit cure him of this defect ? Never. He wants a certain *tact*, he has not a voluntary power over his ideas, but is like a person reading out of a book, or who can only pour out the budget of knowledge with which his brain is crammed in all places and companies alike. If you attempt to divert his attention from the general subject to the persons he is addressing, you puzzle and stop him quite. He is a mere conversing automaton. He has not the *sense of personality*—the faculty of perceiving the effect (as well as the grounds) of his opinions ; and how then should failure or mortification give it him ? It must be a painful reflection, and he must be glad to turn from it ; or after a few reluctant and unsuccessful efforts to correct his errors, he will try to forget or harden himself in them. Finding that he makes so slow and imperceptible a progress in amending his faults, he will take his swing in the opposite direction, will triumph and revel in his supposed excellences, will launch out into the wide, untrammelled field of abstract

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speculation, and silence envious sneers and petty cavils by force of argument and dint of importunity. You will find him the same character at sixty that he was at thirty; or should time soften down some of his asperities, and tire him of his absurdities as he has tired others, nothing will transform him into a man of the world, and he will die in a garret, or a paltry second-floor, from not having been able to acquire the art 'to see ourselves as others see us,' or to dress his opinions, looks, and actions in the smiles and approbation of the world. On the other hand, take a youth from the same town (perhaps a school-fellow, and the dunce of the neighbourhood); he has 'no figures, nor no fantasies which busy thought draws in the brains of men,' no preconceived notions by which he must square his conduct or his conversation, no dogma to maintain in the teeth of opposition, no Shibboleth to which he must force others to subscribe; the progress of science or the good of his fellow-creatures are things about which he has not the remotest conception, or the smallest particle of anxiety—

' His soul proud science never taught to stray  
Far as the solar walk, or milky way ; '

all that he sees or attends to is the immediate path before him, or what can encourage or lend him a helping hand through it; his mind is a complete blank, on which the world may write its maxims and customs in what characters it pleases; he has only to study its humours, flatter its prejudices, and take advantage of its foibles; while walking the streets he is not taken up with solving an abstruse problem, but with considering his own and the appearance of others; instead of contradicting a patron, assents to all he hears; and in every proposition that comes before him asks himself only what he can get by it, and whether it will make him friends or enemies; such a one is said to possess great penetration and knowledge of the world, understands his place in society, gets on in it, rises from the counter to the counting-house, from the dependant to be a partner, amasses a fortune, gains in size and respectability as his affairs prosper, has his town and country house, and ends with buying up half the estates in his native county!

The great secret of a knowledge of the world, then, consists in a subserviency to the will of others, and the primary motive to this attention is a mechanical and watchful perception of our own interest. It is not an art that requires a long course of study, the difficulty is in putting one's self apprentice to it. It does not surely imply any very laborious or profound inquiry into the distinctions of truth or falsehood, to be able to assent to whatever one hears; nor any great

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refinement of moral feeling, to approve of whatever has custom, power, or interest on its side. The only question is, 'Who is willing to do so?'—and the answer is, those who have no other faculties or pretensions, either to stand in the way of or to assist their progress through life. Those are slow to wear the livery of the world who have any independent resources of their own. It is not that the philosopher or the man of genius does not see and know all this, that he is not constantly and forcibly reminded of it by his own failure or the success of others, but he cannot stoop to practise it. He has a different scale of excellence and mould of ambition, which has nothing in common with current maxims and time-serving calculations. He is a moral and intellectual egotist, not a mere worldly-minded one. In youth, he has sanguine hopes and brilliant dreams, which he cannot sacrifice for sordid realities—as he advances farther in life, habit and pride forbid his turning back. He cannot bring himself to give up his best-grounded convictions to a blockhead, or his conscientious principles to a knave, though he might make his fortune by so doing. The rule holds good here as well as in another sense—'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' If his convictions and principles had been less strong, they would have yielded long ago to the suggestions of his interest, and he would have relapsed into the man of the world, or rather he would never have had the temptation or capacity to be any thing else. One thing that keeps men honest, as well as that confirms them knaves, is their incapacity to do any better for themselves than nature has done for them. One person can with difficulty speak the truth, as another lies with a very ill grace. After repeated awkward attempts to change characters, they each very properly fall back into their old *jog-trot* path, as best suited to their genius and habits.

There are individuals who make themselves and every one else uncomfortable by trying to be agreeable, and who are only to be endured in their natural characters of blunt, plain-spoken people. Many a man would have turned rogue if he had known how. *Non ex quovis ligno fit Mercurius*. The modest man cannot be impudent if he would. The man of sense cannot play the fool to advantage. It is not the mere resolution to act a part that will enable us to do it, without a natural genius and fitness for it. Some men are born to be valets, as others are to be courtiers. There is the climbing *genus* in man as well as in plants. It is sometimes made a wonder how men of 'no mark or likelihood' frequently rise to court-preferment, and make their way against all competition. That is the very reason. They present no tangible point; they offend no feeling of self-importance.

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They are a perfect unresisting medium of patronage and favour. They aspire through servility; they repose in insignificance. A man of talent or pretension in the same circumstances would be kicked out in a week. A look that implied a doubt, a hint that suggested a difference of opinion, would be fatal. It is of no use, in parleying with absolute power, to dissemble, to suppress: there must be no feelings or opinions to dissemble or suppress. The artifice of the dependant is not a match for the jealousy of the patron: 'the soul must be subdued to the very quality of its lord.' Where all is annihilated in the presence of the sovereign, is it astonishing that *nothings* should succeed? Ciphers are as necessary in courts as eunuchs in seraglios. I do not think Mr. Cobbett would succeed in an interview with the Prince. Bub Doddington said, 'he would not justify before his Sovereign,' even where his own character was at stake. I am afraid we could hardly reckon upon the same forbearance in Mr. Cobbett where his country's welfare was at stake, and where he had an opportunity of vindicating it. He might have a great deal of reason on his side; but he might forget, or seem to forget, that as the king is above the law, he is also above reason. Reason is but a suppliant at the foot of thrones, and waits for their approval or rebuke. *Salus populi suprema lex*—may be a truism anywhere else. If reason dares to approach them at all, it must be in the shape of deference and humility, not of headstrong importunity and selfwill. Instead of breathless awe, of mild entreaty, of humble remonstrance, it is Mr. Cobbett, who, upon very slight encouragement, would give the law, and the monarch who must kiss the rod. The upstart, the bully, and the dogmatist, would break out, and the King would assert himself. The reformer would be too full of his own opinion to allow an option even to Majesty, and the affair would have the same ending as that of the old ballad—

'Then the Queen overhearing what Betty did say,  
Would send Mr. Roper to take her away.'

As I have brought Mr. Cobbett in here by the neck and shoulders, I may add that I do not think he belongs properly to the class, either of philosophical speculators, or men of the world. He is a political humourist. He is too much taken up with himself either to attend to right reason, or to judge correctly of what passes around him. He mistakes strength of purpose and passion, not only for truth but for success. Because he can give fifty good reasons for a thing, he thinks it not only *ought* to be, but *must* be. Because he is swayed so entirely by his wishes and humours, he believes others will be ready to give

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up their prejudices, interests, and resentments to oblige him. He persuades himself that he is the fittest person to represent Westminster in parliament, and he considers this point (once proved) tantamount to his return. He knows no more of the disposition or sentiments of the people of Westminster than of the inhabitants of the moon (except from what he himself chooses to say or write of them), and it is this want of sympathy which, as much as anything, prevents his being chosen. The exclusive force and bigotry of his opinions deprives them of half their influence and effect, by allowing no toleration to others, and consequently setting them against him.

Mr. Cobbett seemed disappointed, at one time, at not succeeding in the character of a legacy-hunter. Why, a person to succeed in this character, ought to be a mere skin or bag to hold money, a place to deposit it in, a shadow, a deputy, a trustee who keeps it for the original owner—so that the transfer is barely nominal, and who, if he were to return from the other world, would modestly yield it up—one who has no personal identity of his own, no will to encroach upon or dispose of it otherwise than his patron would wish after his death—not a hairbrained egotist, a dashing adventurer, to squander, hector and flourish away with it in wild schemes and ruinous experiments, every one of them at variance with the opinions of the testator; in new methods of turnip hoeing; in speculations in madder—this would be to tear his soul from his body twice over—

‘ His patron’s ghost from Limbo lake the while  
Sees this which more damnation doth upon him pile ! ’

Mr. Cobbett complained, that in his last interview with Baron Mazeres, that gentleman was in his dotage, and that the reverend legatee sat at the bottom of the table, cutting a poor figure, and not contradicting a word the Baron said. No doubt, as he has put this in print in the exuberance of his dissatisfaction, he let both gentlemen see pretty plainly what he thought of them, and fancied that this expression of his contempt, as it gratified him, was the way to ensure the good will of the one to make over his whole estate, or the good word of the other to let him *go snacks*. This is a new way of being *quits* with one’s benefactors, and an egregious *quid pro quo*. If Baron Mazeres had left Mr. Cobbett 200,000*l.* it must have been not to write his epitaph, or visit him in his last moments !

A gossiping chambermaid who only smiles and assents when her mistress wishes her to talk, or an ignorant country clown who stands with his hat off when he has a favour to ask of the squire, (and if he



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is wise, at all other times,) knows more of the matter. A knowledge of mankind is little more than the Scotch instinct of *bowing*, or of 'never standing upright in the presence of a great man,' or of that great blockhead, the world. It is not a perception of truth, but a sense of power, and an instant determination of the will to submit to it. It is therefore less an intellectual acquirement than a natural disposition. It is on this account that I think both cunning and wisdom are a sort of original endowments, or attain maturity much earlier than is supposed, from their being moral qualities, and having their seat in the heart rather than the head. The difference depends on the *manner* of seeing things. The one is a selfish, the other is a disinterested view of nature. The one is the clear open look of integrity, the other is a contracted and blear-eyed obliquity of mental vision. If any one has but the courage and honesty to look at an object as it is in itself, or divested of prejudice, fear, and favour, he will be sure to see it pretty right; as he who regards it through the refractions of opinion and fashion, will be sure to see it distorted and falsified, however, the error may rebound to his own advantage. Certainly, he who makes the universe tributary to his convenience, and subjects all his impressions of what is right or wrong, true or false, black or white, round or square, to the standard and maxims of the world, who never utters a proposition but he fancies a patron close at his elbow who overhears him, who is even afraid, in private, to suffer an honest conviction to rise in his mind, lest it should mount to his lips, get wind, and ruin his prospects in life, ought to gain something in exchange for the restraint and force put upon his thoughts and faculties: on the contrary, he who is confined by no such petty and debasing trammels, whose comprehension of mind is 'in large heart enclosed,' finds his inquiries and his views expand in a degree commensurate with the universe around him; makes truth welcome wherever he meets her, and receives her cordial embrace in return. To see things divested of passion and interest, is to see them with the eye of history and philosophy. It is easy to judge right, or at least to come to a mutual understanding in matters of history and abstract morality. Why then is it so difficult to arrive at the same calm certainty in actual life? Because the passions and interests are concerned, and it requires so much more candour, love of truth, and independence of spirit to encounter 'the world and its dread laugh,' to throw aside every sinister consideration, and grapple with the plain merits of the case. To be wiser than other men is to be honestest than they; and strength of mind is only courage to see and speak the truth. Perhaps the courage may be also owing to the strength; but both go together, and are natural, and not acquired. Do we not see in fables the force

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of the moral principle in detecting the truth ? The only effect of fables is, by making inanimate or irrational things actors in the scene, to remove the case completely from our own sphere, to take our self-love off its guard, to simplify the question ; and yet the result of this obvious appeal is allowed to be universal and irresistible. Is not this another example that ' the heart of man is deceitful above all things ' ; or, that it is less our incapacity to distinguish what is right, than our secret determination to adhere to what is wrong, that prevents our discriminating one from the other ? It is not that great and useful truths are not manifest and discernible in themselves ; but little, dirty objects get between them and us, and from being near and gross, hide the lofty and distant ! The first business of the patriot and the philanthropist is to overleap this barrier, to rise out of this material dross. Indignation, contempt of the base and grovelling, makes the philosopher no less than the poet ; and it is the power of looking beyond self that enables each to inculcate moral truth and nobleness of sentiment, the one by general precepts, the other by individual example.

I have no quarrel with men of the world, mere *muck-worms* : every one after his fashion, ' as the flesh and fortune shall serve ; ' but I confess I have a little distaste to those, who, having set out as loud and vaunting enthusiasts, have turned aside to ' tread the primrose path of dalliance,' and to revile those who did not choose to follow so edifying an example. The candid brow and elastic spring of youth may be exchanged for the wrinkles and crookedness of age ; but at least we should retain something of the erectness and openness of our first unbiassed thoughts. I cannot understand how any degree of egotism can dispense with the consciousness of personal identity. As we advance farther in life, we are naturally inclined to revert in imagination to its commencement ; but what can those dwell upon there who find only feelings that they despise, and opinions that they have abjured ? ' If thine eye offend thee, pull it out and cast it from thee : ' but the operation is a painful one, and the body remains after it only a mutilated fragment. Generally, those who are cut off from this resource in former recollections, make up for it (as well as they can) by an exaggerated and uxorious fondness for their late-espoused convictions—a thing unsightly and indecent ! Why does he, who at one time despises ' the little chapel-bell,' afterwards write ' the Book of the Church ' ? The one is not an atonement for the other : each shows only a juvenile or a superannuated precocity of judgment. It is uniting Camille-Desmoulins and Camille-Jourdan, (*Jourdan of the Chimes*) in one character. I should like (not out of malice, but from curiosity) to see Mr. Southey re-write the beautiful poem on ' his own miniature-picture,

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when he was two years old,' and see what he would substitute for the lines—

‘ And it was thought,  
That thou shouldst tread preferment's flowery path,  
Young Robert ! ’

There must here, I think, be *hiatus in manuscriptis*: the verse must halt a little! The laureate and his friends say that they are still labouring on the same design as ever, correcting the outlines and filling up the unfinished sketch of their early opinions. They seem rather to have blotted them quite out, and to have taken a fresh canvas to begin another and no less extravagant caricature. Or their new and old theories remind one of those heads in picture-dealers' shops, where one half of the face is thoroughly cleaned and repaired, and the other left covered with stains and dirt, to show the necessity of the picture-scourer's art: the transition offends the sight. It may be made a question whether men grow wiser as they grow older, any more than they grow stronger or healthier or honester. They may, in one sense, imbibe a greater portion of worldly wisdom, and have their romantic flights tamed to the level of every day's practice and experience; but perhaps it would be better if some of the extravagance and enthusiasm of youth could be infused into the latter, instead of being absorbed (perforce) in that sink of pride, envy, selfishness, ignorance, conceit, prejudice, and hypocrisy. One thing is certain, that this is the present course of events, and that if the individual grows wiser as he gains experience, the world does not, and that the tardy penitent who is treading back his steps, may meet the world advancing as he is retreating, and adopting more and more of the genuine impulses and disinterested views of youth into its creed. It is, indeed, only by conforming to some such original and unsophisticated standard, that it can acquire either soundness or consistency. The appeal is a fair one, from the bad habits of society to the unprejudiced aspirations and impressions of human nature.

It seems, in truth, a hard case to have all the world against us, and to require uncommon fortitude (not to say presumption) to stand out single against such a host. The bare suggestion must ‘give us pause,’ and has no doubt overturned many an honest conviction. The *opinion of the world*, (as it pompously entitles itself,) if it means anything more than a set of local and party prejudices, with which only our interest, not truth, is concerned, is a shadow, a bugbear, and a contradiction in terms. *Having all the world against us*, is a phrase without a meaning; for in those points in which all the world agree, no one differs from the world. If all the world were

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of the same way of thinking, and always kept in the same mind, it would certainly be a little staggering to have them against you. But however widely and angrily they may differ from you, they differ as much so from one another, and even from themselves. What is gospel at one moment, is heresy the next :—different countries and climates have different notions of things. When you are put on your trial, therefore, for impugning the public opinion, you may always *subpœna* this great body against itself. For example, I have been twitted for somewhere calling Tom Paine a great writer, and no doubt his reputation at present ‘does somewhat smack’ : yet in 1792 he was so great, or so popular an author, and so much read and admired by numbers who would not now mention his name, that the Government was obliged to suspend the Constitution, and to go to war to counteract the effects of his popularity. His extreme popularity was then the cause (by a common and vulgar *reaction*) of his extreme obnoxiousness. If the opinion of the world, then, contradicts itself, why may not I contradict it, or choose at what time, and to what extent I will agree with it? I have been accused of abusing dissenters, and saying that sectaries, in general, are dry and suspicious ; and I believe that all the world will say the same thing except themselves. I have said that the church people are proud and overbearing, which has given them umbrage, though in this I have all the sectaries on my side. I have laughed at the Methodists, and for this I have been accused of glancing at religion : yet who does not laugh at the Methodists as well as myself? But I also laugh at those who laugh at them. I have pointed out by turns the weak sides and foibles of different sects and parties, and they themselves maintain that they are perfect and infallible : and this is what is called having all the world against me. I have inveighed all my life against the insolence of the Tories, and for this I have the authority both of Whigs and Reformers ; but then I have occasionally spoken against the imbecility of the Whigs, and the extravagance of the Reformers, and thus have brought all three on my back, though two out of the three regularly agree with all I say of the third party. Poets do not approve of what I have said of their turning prose-writers ; nor do the politicians approve of my tolerating the fooleries of the fanciful tribe at all : so they make common cause to *damn* me between them. People never excuse the drawbacks from themselves, nor the concessions to an adversary : such is the justice and candour of mankind ! Mr. Wordsworth is not satisfied with the praise I have heaped upon himself, and still less, that I have allowed Mr. Moore to be a poet at all. I do not think I have ever set my face against the popular idols of the day ;

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I have been among the foremost in crying up Mrs. Siddons, Kean, Sir Walter Scott, Madame Pasta, and others; and as to the great names of former times, my admiration has been lavish, and sometimes almost mawkish. I have dissented, it is true, in one or two instances; but that only shows that I judge for myself, not that I make a point of contradicting the general taste. I have been more to blame in trying to push certain Illustrious Obscure into notice:—they have not forgiven the obligation, nor the world the tacit reproach. As to my personalities, they might quite as well be termed *impersonalities*. I am so intent on the abstract proposition and its elucidation, that I regard everything else as of very subordinate consequence: my friends, I conceive, will not refuse to contribute to so laudable an undertaking, and my enemies *must*! I have found fault with the French, I have found fault with the English; and pray, do they not find great, mutual, and just fault with one another? It may seem a great piece of arrogance in any one, to set up his individual and private judgment against that of ten millions of people; but cross the channel, and you will have thirty millions on your side. Even should the thirty millions come over to the opinions of the ten, (a thing that may happen tomorrow,) still one need not despair. I remember my old friend Peter Finnerty, laughing very heartily at something I had written about the Scotch, but it was followed up by a sketch of the Irish, on which he closed the book, looked grave, and said he disapproved entirely of all national reflections. Thus you have all the world on your side, except when it is the party concerned. What any set of people think or say of themselves is hardly a rule for others: yet, if you do not attach yourself to some one set of people and principles, and stick to them through thick and thin, instead of giving your opinion fairly and fully all round, you must expect to have all the world against you, for no other reason than because you express sincerely, and *for their good*, not only what they say of others, but what is said of themselves, which they would fain keep a profound secret, and prevent the divulging of it under the severest pains and penalties. When I told J—— that I had composed a work in which I had ‘in some sort handled’ about a score of leading characters, he said, ‘Then you will have one man against you, and the remaining nineteen for you!’ I have not found it so. In fact, these persons would agree pretty nearly to all that I say, and allow that, in nineteen points out of twenty, I am right; but the twentieth, that relates to some imperfection of their own, weighs down all the rest, and produces an unanimous verdict against the author. There is but one thing in which the world agree, a certain bigoted blindness, and

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conventional hypocrisy, without which, according to Mandeville, (that is, if they really spoke what they thought and knew of one another,) they would fall to cutting each other's throats immediately.

We find the same contrariety and fluctuation of opinion in different ages, as well as countries and classes. For about a thousand years, during 'the high and palmy state' of the Romish hierarchy, it was agreed (*nemine contradicente*) that *two and two made five*: afterwards, for above a century, there was great battling and controversy to prove that they made four and a half; then, for a century more, it was thought a great stride taken to come down to four and a quarter; and, perhaps, in another century or two, it will be discovered for a wonder that *two and two actually make four*! It is said, that this slow advance and perpetual interposition of impediments is a salutary check to the rashness of innovation, and to hazardous experiments. At least, it is a very effectual one, amounting almost to a prohibition. One age is employed in building up an absurdity, and the next exhausts all its wit and learning, zeal and fury, in battering it down, so that at the end of two generations you come to the point where you set out, and have to begin again. These heats and disputes about external points of faith may be things of no consequence, since under all the variations of form or doctrine the essentials of practice remain the same. It does not seem so; at any rate, the non-essentials appear to excite all the interest, and 'keep this dreadful pudder o'er our heads'; and when the dogma is once stripped of mystery and intolerance, and reduced to common sense, no one appears to take any further notice of it.

The appeal, then, to the authority of the world, chiefly resolves itself into the old proverb, that 'when you are at Rome you must do as those at Rome do'; that is, it is a shifting circle of local prejudices and gratuitous assumptions, a successful conformity to which is best insured by a negation of all other qualities that might interfere with it: solid reason and virtue are out of the question. But it may be insisted, that there are qualities of a more practical order that may greatly contribute to and facilitate our advancement in life, such as presence of mind, convivial talents, insight into character, thorough acquaintance with the profounder principles and secret springs of society, and so forth. I do not deny that all this may be of advantage in extraordinary cases, and often abridge difficulties; but I do not think that it is either necessary or generally useful. For instance, habitual caution and reserve is a surer resource than that presence of mind, or quick-witted readiness of expedient, which, though it gets men out of scrapes, as often leads them into them by begetting a false confidence.

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Persons of agreeable and lively talents often find to their cost that one indiscretion procures them more enemies than ten agreeable sallies do friends. A too great penetration into character is less desirable than a certain power of hoodwinking ourselves to their defects, unless the former is accompanied with a profound hypocrisy, which is also liable to detection and discomfiture : and as to general maxims and principles of worldly knowledge, I conceive that an instinctive sympathy with them is much more profitable than their incautious discovery and formal announcement. Thus, the politic rule, 'When a great wheel goes up a hill, cling fast to it; when a great wheel runs down a hill, let go your hold of it,' may be useful as a hint or warning to the shyness or fidelity of an Englishman; a North Briton feels its truth instinctively, and acts upon it unconsciously. When it is observed in the *History of a Foundling*, that 'Mr. Alworthy had done so many charitable actions that he had made enemies of the whole parish,' the sarcasm is the dictate of a generous indignation at ingratitude rather than a covert apology for selfish niggardliness. Misanthropic reflections have their source in philanthropic sentiments; the real despiser of the world keeps up appearances with it, and is at pains to varnish over its vices and follies, even to himself, lest his secret should be betrayed, and do him an injury. Those who see completely into the world begin to play tricks with it, and overreach themselves by being too knowing: it is even possible to *out-cant* it, and get laughed at that way. Fielding knew something of the world, yet he did not make a fortune. Sir Walter Scott has twice made a fortune by descriptions of nature and character, and has twice lost it by the same fondness for speculative gains. Wherever there is a strong faculty for anything, the exercise of that faculty becomes its own end and reward, and produces an indifference or inattention to other things; so that the best security for success in the world is an incapacity for success in any other way. A bookseller to succeed in his business should have no knowledge of books, except as marketable commodities: the instant he has a taste, an opinion of his own on the subject, he may consider himself as a ruined man. In like manner, a picture-dealer should know nothing of pictures but the catalogue price, the cant of the day. The moment he has a feeling for the art, he will be tenacious of it: a Guido, a Salvator 'will be the fatal Cleopatra for which he will lose all he is worth, and be content to lose it.' Should a general then know nothing of war, a physician of medicine? No: because this is an art and not a trick, and the one has to contend with nature, and the other with an enemy, and not to pamper or cajole the follies of the world. It requires also great talents to overturn the world; not, to push one's fortune in it: to rule the state like

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Cromwell or Buonaparte; not, to rise in it like Castlereagh or Croker. Yet, even in times of crisis and convulsion, he who outrages the feeling of the moment and echoes the wildest extravagance, succeeds; as, in times of peace and tranquillity, he does so who acquiesces most tamely in the ordinary routine of things. This may serve to point out another error, common to men of the world, who sometimes, giving themselves credit for more virtue than they possess, declare very candidly that if they had to begin life over again, they would have been *great rogues*. The answer to this is, that then they would have been *hanged*! No: the way to get on in the world is to be neither more nor less wise, neither better nor worse than your neighbours, neither to be a 'reformer nor a house-breaker,' neither to advance before the age nor lag behind it, but to be as like it as possible, to reflect its image and superscription at every turn, and then you will be its darling and its delight, and it will dandle you and fondle you, and make much of you, as a monkey doats upon its young! The knowledge of vice—that is, of *statutable* vice—is not the knowledge of the world: otherwise a Bow-street runner and the keeper of a house of ill fame would be the most knowing characters, and would soon rise above their professions.

### ESSAY XXVIII

#### ON PUBLIC OPINION

'Scared at the sound itself has made.'

ONCE asking a friend why he did not bring forward an explanation of a circumstance, in which his conduct had been called in question, he said, 'His friends were satisfied on the subject, and he cared very little about the opinion of the world.' I made answer that I did not consider this a good ground to rest his defence upon, for that a man's friends seldom thought better of him than the world did. I see no reason to alter this opinion. Our friends, indeed, are more apt than a mere stranger to join in with, or be silent under, any imputation thrown out against us, because they are apprehensive they may be indirectly implicated in it, and they are bound to betray us to save their own credit. To judge of our jealousy, our sensibility, our high notions of responsibility on this score, only consider if a single individual lets fall a solitary remark implying a doubt of the wit, the sense, the courage of a friend,—how it staggers us—how it makes us shake with fear—how it makes us call up all our eloquence and airs



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of self-consequence in his defence, lest our partiality should be supposed to have blinded our perceptions, and we should be regarded as the dupes of a mistaken admiration. We already begin to meditate an escape from a losing cause, and try to find out some other fault in the character under discussion, to show that we are not behind-hand (if the truth must be spoken) in sagacity, and a sense of the ridiculous. If, then, this is the case with the first flaw, the first doubt, the first speck that dims the sun of friendship, so that we are ready to turn our backs on our sworn attachment and well-known professions the instant we have not all the world with us, what must it be when we have all the world against us; when our friend, instead of a single stain, is covered with mud from head to foot; how shall we expect our feeble voices not to be drowned in the general clamour? how shall we dare to oppose our partial and mis-timed suffrages to the just indignation of the public? Or if it should not amount to this, how shall we answer the silence and contempt with which his name is received? how shall we animate the great mass of indifference or distrust with our private enthusiasm? how defeat the involuntary smile, or the suppressed sneer, with the burst of generous feeling and the glow of honest conviction? It is a thing not to be thought of, unless we would enter into a crusade against prejudice and malignity, devote ourselves as martyrs to friendship, raise a controversy in every company we go into, quarrel with every person we meet, and after making ourselves and everyone else uncomfortable, leave off, not by clearing our friend's reputation, but by involving our own pretensions to decency and common sense. People will not fail to observe, that a man may have his reasons for his faults or vices; but that for another to volunteer a defence of them, is without excuse. It is, in fact, an attempt to deprive them of the great and only benefit they derive from the supposed errors of their neighbours and contemporaries—the pleasure of backbiting and railing at them, which they call *seeing justice done*. It is not a single breath of rumour or opinion; but the whole atmosphere is infected with a sort of aguish taint of anger and suspicion, that relaxes the nerves of fidelity, and makes our most sanguine resolutions sicken and turn pale; and he who is proof against it, must either be armed with a love of truth, or a contempt for mankind, which place him out of the reach of ordinary rules and calculations. For myself, I do not shrink from defending a cause or a friend *under a cloud*; though in neither case will cheap or common efforts suffice. But, in the first, you merely stand up for your own judgment and principles against fashion and prejudice, and thus assume a sort of manly and heroic attitude of defiance: in the last, (which makes it a matter of greater nicety and nervous sensi-

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bility,) you sneak behind another to throw your gauntlet at the whole world, and it requires a double stock of stoical firmness not to be laughed out of your boasted zeal and independence as a romantic and *amiable weakness*.<sup>1</sup>

There is nothing in which all the world agree but in running down some obnoxious individual. It may be supposed, that this is not for nothing, and that they have good reasons for what they do. On the contrary, I will undertake to say, that so far from there being invariably just grounds for such an universal outcry, the universality of the outcry is often the only ground of the opinion; and that it is purposely raised upon this principle, that all other proof or evidence against the person meant to be run down is wanting. Nay, farther, it may happen, while the clamour is at the loudest; while you hear it from all quarters; while it blows a perfect hurricane; while 'the world rings with the vain stir'—not one of those who are most eager in hearing and echoing it knows what it is about, or is not fully persuaded, that the charge is equally false, malicious, and absurd. It is like the wind, that 'no man knoweth whence it cometh, or whither it goeth.' It is *vox et præterea nihil*. What then is it that gives it its confident circulation and its irresistible force? It is the loudness of the organ with which it is pronounced, the stentorian lungs of the multitude; the number of voices that take it up and repeat it, because others have done so; the rapid flight and the impalpable nature of common fame, that makes it a desperate undertaking for any individual to inquire into or arrest the mischief that, in the deafening buzz or loosened roar of laughter or of indignation, renders it impossible for the still small voice of reason to be heard, and leaves no other course to honesty or prudence than to fall flat on the face before it as before the pestilential blast of the Desert, and wait till it has passed over. Thus everyone joins in asserting, propagating, and in outwardly approving what everyone, in his private and unbiassed judgment, believes and knows to be scandalous and untrue. For everyone in such circumstances keeps his own opinion to himself, and only attends to or acts upon that which he conceives to be the opinion of everyone but himself. So that public opinion is not seldom a farce, equal to any acted upon the stage. Not only is it spurious and hollow in the way that Mr. Locke points out, by one man's taking up at second hand the opinion of another, but worse than this, one man takes up

<sup>1</sup> The only friends whom we defend with zeal and obstinacy are our relations. They seem part of ourselves. We cannot shake them off till they are hanged, nor then neither! For our other friends we are only answerable, as long as we countenance them; and we therefore cut the connection as soon as possible. But who ever willingly gave up the good dispositions of a child, or the honour of a parent?

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what he believes another *will* think and which the latter professes only because he believes it held by the first ! All therefore that is necessary, to control public opinion, is, to gain possession of some organ loud and lofty enough to make yourself heard, that has power and interest on its side ; and then, no sooner do you blow a blast in this trumpet of *ill-fame*, like the horn hung up by an old castle-wall, than you are answered, echoed, and accredited on all sides : the gates are thrown open to receive you, and you are admitted into the very heart of the fortress of public opinion, and can assail from the ramparts with every engine of abuse, and with privileged impunity, all those who may come forward to vindicate the truth, or to rescue their good name from the unprincipled keeping of authority, servility, sophistry and venal falsehood ! The only thing wanted is to give an alarm—to excite a panic in the public mind of being left *in the lurch*, and the rabble (whether in the ranks of literature or war) will throw away their arms, and surrender at discretion to any bully or impostor who, for a *consideration*, shall choose to try the experiment upon them !

What I have here described is the effect even upon the candid and well-disposed :—what must it be to the malicious and idle, who are eager to believe all the ill they can hear of everyone ; or to the prejudiced and interested, who are determined to credit all the ill they hear against those who are not of their own side ? To these last it is only requisite to be understood that the butt of ridicule or slander is of an opposite party, and they presently give you *carte blanche* to say what you please of him. Do they know that it is true ? No ; but they believe what all the world says, till they have evidence to the contrary. Do you prove that it is false ? They dare say, that if not, that something worse remains behind ; and they retain the same opinion as before, for the honour of their party. They hire someone to pelt you with mud, and then affect to avoid you in the street as a dirty fellow. They are told that you have a hump on your back, and then wonder at your assurance or want of complaisance in walking into a room where they are, without it. Instead of apologising for the mistake, and, from finding one aspersion false, doubting all the rest, they are only more confirmed in the remainder from being deprived of one handle against you, and resent their disappointment, instead of being ashamed of their credulity. People talk of the bigotry of the Catholics, and treat with contempt the absurd claim of the Popes to infallibility—I think, with little right to do so. I walk into a church in Paris, where I am struck with a number of idle forms and ceremonies, the chaunting of the service in Latin, the shifting of the surplices, the sprinkling of holy-water, the painted windows ‘ casting a dim religious light,’ the wax-tapers, the

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pealing organ : the common people seem attentive and devout, and to put entire faith in all this—Why? Because they imagine others to do so, they see and hear certain signs and supposed evidences of it, and it amuses and fills up the void of the mind, the love of the mysterious and wonderful, to lend their assent to it. They have assuredly, in general, no better reason—all our Protestant divines will tell you so. Well, I step out of the church of St. Roche, and drop into an English reading-room hard by : what am I the better? I see a dozen or a score of my countrymen, with their faces fixed, and their eyes glued to a newspaper, a magazine, a review—reading, swallowing, profoundly ruminating on the lie, the cant, the sophism of the day! Why? It saves them the trouble of thinking; it gratifies their ill-humour, and keeps off *ennui*! Does any gleam of doubt, an air of ridicule or a glance of impatience pass across their features at the shallow and monstrous things they find? No, it is all passive faith and dull security; they cannot take their eyes from the page, they cannot live without it. They believe in Mr. Blackwood, (you see it in their faces) as implicitly as in Sir John Barleycorn; in the John Bull as in a sirloin of beef; in the Quarterly as assuredly as in quarter-day—as they hope to receive their rents, or to see old England again! Are not the Popes, the Fathers, the Councils, as good as these oracles, scouts, and champions of theirs? They know that the John Bull, for instance, is a hoax, a humbug, an impudent imposture, got up, week by week, to puff whom it pleases, to bully whom it pleases, to traduce whom it pleases, without any principle but a hint from its patrons, or without a pretence to any other principle. Do they believe in the known lie, the gross ribaldry, the foul calumny, the less on that account? They believe the more in it : because it is got up solely and expressly to serve a cause that needs such support—and they swear by whatever is devoted to this object.

The greater the profligacy, the effrontery, the servility, the greater the faith. Strange! that the British public (whether at home or abroad) should shake their heads at the Lady of Loretto, and repose deliciously on Mr. Theodore Hook! It may be thought that the enlightened part of the British public (persons of family and fortune, and often title, who have had a college-education and received the benefit of foreign travel) see through the quackery, which they encourage only for a political purpose, without being themselves the dupes of it. Suppose an individual of whom it has been repeatedly asserted that he has warts on his nose, were to enter the reading-room aforesaid in the Rue de la Paix—is there a single red-faced country squire who would not be surprised at not finding this part of the story true—would not persuade himself five minutes after that he could not

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have been seen correctly, or that some art had been used to conceal the defect, or would be led to doubt, from this instance, Mr. Blackwood's general candour and veracity? On the contrary, the gentleman would be obliged to disbelieve his senses rather than give Mr. Blackwood the lie, who is read and believed by the whole world. He would have a host of witnesses against him: there is not a reader of Blackwood who would not swear to the fact. Seeing is believing, it is said. Lying is believing, say I. We do not even see with our own eyes, but must 'wink and shut our apprehensions up,' that we may be able to agree to the report of others, as a piece of good manners and point of established etiquette.—Besides, the supposed deformity answered his wishes: the abuse 'fed fat the ancient grudge he owed' some presumptuous scribbler, for not agreeing in a number of points with his betters: it gave him a personal advantage over one he did not like—and who will give up what tends to strengthen his aversion against another? To Tory prejudice, sore as it is—to English imagination, morbid as it is, a nickname, a ludicrous epithet, a malignant falsehood (when it has once been propagated and taken to bosoms as a welcome consolation) becomes a precious property, a vested right; and people would as soon give up a sinecure, or a share in a close borough, as a plenary indulgence (published monthly with the court privilege) to speak and think with contempt of those who would abolish the one or throw open the other.

### ESSAY XXIX

#### ON THE CAUSES OF POPULAR OPINION

PARTY-SPIRIT is the best reason in the world for personal antipathy and vulgar abuse.

'But, do you not think, Sir,' (methinks I hear some Scotch dialectician exclaim,) 'that belief is involuntary, and that we judge in all cases according to the precise degree of evidence and the positive facts before us?'

No, Sir.

'You believe, then, in the doctrine of philosophical free-will?'

Indeed, Sir, I do not.

'How then, Sir, am I to understand so unaccountable a diversity of opinion from the most approved writers on the philosophy of the human mind, such as Mr. Dugald Stewart and the Editors of the Edinburgh Encyclopædia?'

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May I ask, my dear Sir, did you ever read Mr. Wordsworth's poem of Michael?

'I cannot charge my memory with the fact; or I paid no particular attention to it at the time, as I have always agreed with the Edinburgh Review in considering Mr. Wordsworth's poetry as remarkably silly and puerile.'

But still true to Nature in a humble way.

'Why, I think, Sir, something of that kind is admitted (either by way of ridicule or praise) in the article in the Review.'

Well, Sir, this Michael is an old shepherd, who has a son who goes to sea, and who turns out a great reprobate by all the accounts received of him. Before he went, however, the father took the boy with him into a mountain-glen, and made him lay the first stone of a sheep-fold, which was to be a covenant and a remembrance between them if anything ill happened. For years after, the old man used to go to work at this sheep-fold—

'Among the rocks  
He went, and still look'd up upon the sun,  
And listen'd to the wind'—

and sat by the half-finished work, expecting the lad's return, or hoping to hear some better tidings of him. Was this hope founded on reason—or was it not owing to the strength of affection which, in spite of everything, could not relinquish its hold of a favourite object, indeed the only one that bound it to existence?

Not being able to make my Scotchman answer kindly to interrogatories, I must get on without him. Indeed, I have generally found the natives of that country greater hindrances than helps. In matters of absolute demonstration and speculative indifferences, I grant, that belief is involuntary, and the proof not to be resisted; but then, in such matters, there is no difference of opinion, or the difference is adjusted amicably and rationally. Hobbes is of opinion, that if their passions or interests could be implicated in the question, men would deny stoutly that the three angles of a right-angled triangle are equal to two right ones: and the disputes in religion look something like it. I only contend, however, that in all cases not of this peremptory and determinate cast, and where disputes commonly arise, inclination, habit, and example have a powerful share in throwing in the casting-weight to our opinions; and that he who is only tolerably free from these, and not their regular dupe or slave, is indeed 'a man of ten thousand.' Take, for instance, the example of a Catholic clergyman in a popish country: it will generally be found that he lives and dies in the faith in which he was brought up, as the Protestant clergyman

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does in his.—Shall we say that the necessity of gaining a livelihood or the prospect of preferment, that the early bias given to his mind by education and study, the pride of victory, the shame of defeat, the example and encouragement of all about him, the respect and love of his flock, the flattering notice of the great, have no effect in giving consistency to his opinions and carrying them through to the last? Yet, who will suppose that in either case this apparent uniformity is mere hypocrisy, or that the intellects of the two classes of divines are naturally adapted to the arguments in favour of the two religions they have occasion to profess? No: but the understanding takes a tincture from outward impulses and circumstances, and is led to dwell on those suggestions which favour, and to blind itself to the objections which impugn, the side to which it previously and morally inclines. Again, even in those who oppose established opinions, and form the little, firm, formidable phalanx of dissent, have not early instruction, spiritual pride, the love of contradiction, a resistance to usurped authority, as much to do with the keeping up the war of sects and schisms as the abstract love of truth or conviction of the understanding? Does not persecution fan the flame in such fiery tempers, and does it not expire, or grow lukewarm, with indulgence and neglect? I have a sneaking kindness for a Popish priest in this country; and to a Catholic peer I would willingly bow in passing. What are national antipathies, individual attachments, but so many expressions of the *moral* principle in forming our opinions? All our opinions become grounds on which we act, and build our expectations of good or ill; and this good or ill mixed up with them is soon changed into the ruling principle which modifies or violently supersedes the original cool determination of the reason and senses. The will, when it once gets a footing, turns the sober judgment out of doors. If we form an attachment to any one, are we not slow in giving it up? or, if our suspicions are once excited, are we not equally rash and violent in believing the worst? Othello characterizes himself as one

‘ Who loved not wisely, but too well;  
As one not easily wrought—but, being jealous,  
Perplex’d in the extreme.’

And this answers to the movements and irregularities of passion and opinion which take place in human nature. If we wish a thing, we are disposed to believe it; if we have been accustomed to believe it, we are the more obstinate in defending it on that account: if all the world differ from us in any questions of moment, we are ashamed to own it; or are hurried by peevishness and irritation into extravagance and paradox. The weight of example presses upon us (whether we

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feel it or not) like the law of gravitation. He who sustains his opinion by the strength of conviction and evidence alone, unmoved by ridicule, neglect, obloquy, or privation, shows no less resolution than the Hindoo who makes and keeps a vow to hold his right arm in the air till it grows rigid and callous.

To have all the world against us is trying to a man's temper and philosophy. It unhinges even our opinion of our own motives and intentions. It is like striking the actual world from under our feet: the void that is left, the death-like pause, the chilling suspense, is fearful. The growth of an opinion is like the growth of a limb: it receives its actual support and nourishment from the general body of the opinions, feelings, and practice of the world: without that, it soon withers, festers, and becomes useless. To what purpose write a good book, if it is sure to be pronounced a bad one, even before it is read? If our thoughts are to be blown stifling back upon ourselves, why utter them at all? It is only exposing what we love most to contumely and insult, and thus depriving ourselves of our own relish and satisfaction in them. Language is only made to communicate our sentiments, and if we can find no one to receive them, we are reduced to the silence of dumbness, we live but in the solitude of a dungeon. If we do not vindicate our opinions, we seem poor creatures who have no right to them; if we speak out, we are involved in continual brawls and controversy. If we condemn what others admire, we make ourselves odious: if we admire what they despise, we are equally ridiculous. We have not the applause of the world nor the support of a party: we can neither enjoy the freedom of social intercourse, nor the calm of privacy. With our respect for others, we lose confidence in ourselves: everything seems to be a subject of litigation—to want proof or confirmation; we doubt, by degrees, whether we stand on our head or our heels—whether we know our right hand from our left. If I am assured that I never wrote a sentence of common English in my life, how can I know that that is not the case? If I am told at one time that my writings are as heavy as lead, and at another, that they are more light than the gossamer—what resource have I but to choose between the two? I could say, if this were the place, what those writings are.—‘Make it the place, and never stand upon punctilio!’

They are not, then, so properly the works of an author by profession, as the thoughts of a metaphysician expressed by a painter. They are subtle and difficult problems translated into hieroglyphics. I thought for several years on the hardest subjects, on Fate, Free Will, Foreknowledge absolute, without ever making use of words or images at all, and that has made them come in such throngs and



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confused heaps when I burst from that void of abstraction. In proportion to the tenuity to which my ideas had been drawn, and my abstinence from ornament and sensible objects, was the tenaciousness with which actual circumstances and picturesque imagery laid hold of my mind, when I turned my attention to them, or had to look round for illustrations. Till I began to paint, or till I became acquainted with the author of *The Ancient Mariner*, I could neither write nor speak. He encouraged me to write a book, which I did according to the original bent of my mind, making it as dry and meagre as I could, so that it fell still-born from the press, and none of those who abuse me for a shallow *catch-penny* writer have so much as heard of it. Yet, let me say that that work contains an important metaphysical discovery, supported by a continuous and severe train of reasoning, nearly as subtle and original as anything in Hume or Berkeley. I am not accustomed to speak of myself in this manner, but impudence may provoke modesty to justify itself. Finding this method did not answer, I despaired for a time: but some trifle I wrote in the Morning Chronicle meeting the approbation of the Editor and the town, I resolved to turn over a new leaf—to take the public at its word, to muster all the tropes and figures I could lay hands on, and, though I am a plain man, never to appear abroad but in an embroidered dress. Still, old habits will prevail; and I hardly ever set about a paragraph or a criticism, but there was an under-current of thought, or some generic distinction on which the whole turned. Having got my clue, I had no difficulty in stringing pearls upon it; and the more recondite the point, the more I laboured to bring it out and set it off by a variety of ornaments and allusions. This puzzled the court-scribes, whose business it was to crush me. They could not see the meaning: they would not see the colouring, for it hurt their eyes. Oh, had I been but one of them, I might even have dined with Mr. Murray! One cried out, it was dull; another, that it was too fine by half: my friends took up this last alternative as the most favourable; and since then it has been agreed that I am a florid writer, somewhat flighty and paradoxical. Yet, when I wished to unburthen my mind in the Edinburgh by an article on English (not Scotch) metaphysics, J—— who echoes this *florid* charge, said he preferred what I wrote for effect, and was afraid of its being thought heavy—by the side of Macculloch! I have accounted for the flowers;—the paradoxes may be accounted for in the same way. All abstract reasoning is in extremes, or only takes up one view of a question, or what is called the principle of the thing; and if you want to give this popularity and effect, you are in danger of running into extravagance and hyperbole. I have had to bring out

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some obscure distinction, or to combat some strong prejudice, and in doing this with all my might, may have often overshot the mark. It was easy to correct the excess of truth afterwards. I have been accused of inconsistency, for writing an essay, for instance, on the Advantages of Pedantry, and another, on the *Ignorance of the Learned*, as if ignorance had not its comforts as well as knowledge. The personalities I have fallen into have never been gratuitous. If I have sacrificed my friends, it has always been to a theory. I have been found fault with for repeating myself, and for a narrow range of ideas. To a want of general reading, I plead guilty, and am sorry for it; but perhaps if I had read more, I might have thought less. As to my barrenness of invention, I have at least glanced over a number of subjects—painting, poetry, prose, plays, politics, parliamentary speakers, metaphysical lore, books, men, and things. There is some point, some fancy, some feeling, some taste shown in treating of these. Which of my conclusions has been reversed? Is it what I said ten years ago of the Bourbons which raised the war-whoop against me? Surely all the world are of that opinion now. I have, then, given proofs of some talent, and of more honesty: if there is haste or want of method, there is no common-place, nor a line that licks the dust; and if I do not appear to more advantage, I at least appear such as I am. If the Editor of the Atlas will do me the favour to look over my *Essay on the Principles of Human Action*, will dip into any essay I ever wrote (except one that appeared in the Retrospective Review, which was not my own, though I was very handsomely paid the full price of an original composition for it), and will take a sponge and clear the dust from the face of my *Old Woman* (which he can see at a common friend's), I hope he will, upon second thoughts, acquit me of an absolute dearth of resources and want of versatility in the direction of my studies.

### ESSAY XXX

#### A FAREWELL TO ESSAY-WRITING <sup>1</sup>

'This life is best, if quiet life is best.'

Food, warmth, sleep, and a book; these are all I at present ask—the *ultima thule* of my wandering desires. Do you not then wish for

'A friend in your retreat,

Whom you may whisper, solitude is sweet?'

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<sup>1</sup> Written at Winterslow Hut, February 20, 1828.

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Expected, well enough :—gone, still better. Such attractions are strengthened by distance. Nor a mistress? ‘Beautiful mask! I know thee!’ When I can judge of the heart from the face, of the thoughts from the lips, I may again trust myself. Instead of these, give me the robin red-breast, pecking the crumbs at the door, or warbling on the leafless spray, the same glancing form that has followed me wherever I have been, and ‘done its spiriting gently’; or the rich notes of the thrush that startle the ear of winter, and seem to have drunk up the full draught of joy from the very sense of contrast. To these I adhere and am faithful, for they are true to me; and, dear in themselves, are dearer for the sake of what is departed, leading me back (by the hand) to that dreaming world, in the innocence of which they sat and made sweet music, waking the promise of future years, and answered by the eager throbbings of my own breast. But now ‘the credulous hope of mutual minds is o’er,’ and I turn back from the world that has deceived me, to nature that lent it a false beauty, and that keeps up the illusion of the past. As I quaff my libations of tea in a morning, I love to watch the clouds sailing from the west, and fancy that ‘the spring comes slowly up this way.’ In this hope, while ‘fields are dank and ways are mire,’ I follow the same direction to a neighbouring wood, where, having gained the dry, level greensward, I can see my way for a mile before me, closed in on each side by copse-wood, and ending in a point of light more or less brilliant, as the day is bright or cloudy. What a walk is this to me! I have no need of book or companion—the days, the hours, the thoughts of my youth are at my side, and blend with the air that fans my cheek. Here I can saunter for hours, bending my eye forward, stopping and turning to look back, thinking to strike off into some less trodden path, yet hesitating to quit the one I am in, afraid to snap the brittle threads of memory. I remark the shining trunks and slender branches of the birch trees, waving in the idle breeze; or a pheasant springs up on whirring wing; or I recall the spot where I once found a wood-pigeon at the foot of a tree, weltering in its gore, and think how many seasons have flown since ‘it left its little life in air.’ Dates, names, faces come back—to what purpose? Or why think of them now? Or rather, why not think of them oftener? We walk through life, as through a narrow path, with a thin curtain drawn around it; behind are ranged rich portraits, airy harps are strung—yet we will not stretch forth our hands and lift aside the veil, to catch glimpses of the one, or sweep the chords of the other. As in a theatre, when the old-fashioned green curtain drew up, groups of figures, fantastic dresses, laughing faces, rich banquets, stately columns, gleaming vistas appeared

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beyond; so we have only at any time to 'peep through the blanket of the past,' to possess ourselves at once of all that has regaled our senses, that is stored up in our memory, that has struck our fancy, that has pierced our hearts:—yet to all this we are indifferent, insensible, and seem intent only on the present vexation, the future disappointment. If there is a Titian hanging up in the room with me, I scarcely regard it: how then should I be expected to strain the mental eye so far, or to throw down, by the magic spells of the will, the stone-walls that enclose it in the Louvre? There is one head there of which I have often thought, when looking at it, that nothing should ever disturb me again, and I would become the character it represents—such perfect calmness and self-possession reigns in it! Why do I not hang an image of this in some dusky corner of my brain, and turn an eye upon it ever and anon, as I have need of some such talisman to calm my troubled thoughts? The attempt is fruitless, if not natural; or, like that of the French, to hang garlands on the grave, and to conjure back the dead by miniature pictures of them while living! It is only some actual coincidence, or local association that tends, without violence, to 'open all the cells where memory slept.' I can easily, by stooping over the long-sprent grass and clay-cold clod, recall the tufts of primroses, or purple hyacinths, that formerly grew on the same spot, and cover the bushes with leaves and singing-birds, as they were eighteen summers ago; or prolonging my walk and hearing the sighing gale rustle through a tall, strait wood at the end of it, can fancy that I distinguish the cry of hounds, and the fatal group issuing from it, as in the tale of Theodore and Honoria. A moaning gust of wind aids the belief; I look once more to see whether the trees before me answer to the idea of the horror-stricken grove, and an air-built city towers over their grey tops.

'Of all the cities in Romanian lands,  
The chief and most renown'd Ravenna stands.'

I return home resolved to read the entire poem through, and, after dinner, drawing my chair to the fire, and holding a small print close to my eyes, launch into the full tide of Dryden's couplets (a stream of sound), comparing his didactic and descriptive pomp with the simple pathos and picturesque truth of Boccaccio's story, and tasting with a pleasure, which none but an habitual reader can feel, some quaint examples of pronunciation in this accomplished versifier.

'Which when Honoria view'd,  
The fresh *impulse* her former fright renew'd.'

*Theodore and Honoria.*

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'And made th' *insult*, which in his grief appears,  
The means to mourn thee with my pious tears.'

*Sigismonda and Guiscardo.*

These trifling instances of the wavering and unsettled state of the language give double effect to the firm and stately march of the verse, and make me dwell with a sort of tender interest on the difficulties and doubts of an earlier period of literature. They pronounced words then in a manner which we should laugh at now; and they wrote verse in a manner which we can do anything but laugh at. The pride of a new acquisition seems to give fresh confidence to it; to impel the rolling syllables through the moulds provided for them, and to overflow the envious bounds of rhyme into time-honoured triplets. I am much pleased with Leigh Hunt's mention of Moore's involuntary admiration of Dryden's free, unshackled verse, and of his repeating *con amore*, and with an Irish spirit and accent, the fine lines—

'Let honour and preferment go for gold,  
But glorious beauty isn't to be sold.'

What sometimes surprises me in looking back to the past, is, with the exception already stated, to find myself so little changed in the time. The same images and trains of thought stick by me: I have the same tastes, likings, sentiments, and wishes that I had then. One great ground of confidence and support has, indeed, been struck from under my feet; but I have made it up to myself by proportionable pertinacity of opinion. The success of the great cause, to which I had vowed myself, was to me more than all the world: I had a strength in its strength, a resource which I knew not of, till it failed me for the second time.

'Fall'n was Glenartny's stately tree!  
Oh! ne'er to see Lord Ronald more!'

It was not till I saw the axe laid to the root, that I found the full extent of what I had to lose and suffer. But my conviction of the right was only established by the triumph of the wrong; and my earliest hopes will be my last regrets. One source of this unbendingness, (which some may call obstinacy,) is that, though living much alone, I have never worshipped the Echo. I see plainly enough that black is not white, that the grass is green, that kings are not their subjects; and, in such self-evident cases, do not think it necessary to collate my opinions with the received prejudices. In subtler questions, and matters that admit of doubt, as I do not impose my opinion on others without a reason, so I will not give up mine to them without a better reason; and a person calling me names, or giving himself airs

## A FAREWELL TO ESSAY-WRITING

of authority, does not convince me of his having taken more pains to find out the truth than I have, but the contrary. Mr. Gifford once said, that 'while I was sitting over my gin and tobacco-pipes, I fancied myself a Leibnitz.' He did not so much as know that I had ever read a metaphysical book :—was I therefore, out of complaisance or deference to him, to forget whether I had or not? I am rather disappointed, both on my own account and his, that Mr. Hunt has missed the opportunity of explaining the character of a friend, as clearly as he might have done. He is puzzled to reconcile the shyness of my pretensions with the inveteracy and sturdiness of my principles. I should have thought they were nearly the same thing. Both from disposition and habit, I can *assume* nothing in word, look, or manner. I cannot steal a march upon public opinion in any way. My standing upright, speaking loud, entering a room gracefully, proves nothing; therefore I neglect these ordinary means of recommending myself to the good graces and admiration of strangers, (and, as it appears, even of philosophers and friends). Why? Because I have other resources, or, at least, am absorbed in other studies and pursuits. Suppose this absorption to be extreme, and even morbid, that I have brooded over an idea till it has become a kind of substance in my brain, that I have reasons for a thing which I have found out with much labour and pains, and to which I can scarcely do justice without the utmost violence of exertion (and that only to a few persons,)—is this a reason for my playing off my out-of-the-way notions in all companies, wearing a prim and self-complacent air, as if I were 'the admired of all observers'? or is it not rather an argument, (together with a want of animal spirits,) why I should retire into myself, and perhaps acquire a nervous and uneasy look, from a consciousness of the disproportion between the interest and conviction I feel on certain subjects, and my ability to communicate what weighs upon my own mind to others? If my ideas, which I do not avouch, but suppose, lie below the surface, why am I to be always attempting to dazzle superficial people with them, or smiling, delighted, at my own want of success?

What I have here stated is only the excess of the common and well-known English and scholastic character. I am neither a buffoon, a fop, nor a Frenchman, which Mr. Hunt would have me to be. He finds it odd that I am a close reasoner and a loose dresser. I have been (among other follies) a hard liver as well as a hard thinker; and the consequences of that will not allow me to dress as I please. People in real life are not like players on a stage, who put on a certain look or *costume*, merely for effect. I am aware, indeed, that the gay and airy pen of the author does not seriously

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probe the errors or misfortunes of his friends—he only glances at their seeming peculiarities, so as to make them odd and ridiculous; for which forbearance few of them will thank him. Why does he assert that I was vain of my hair when it was black, and am equally vain of it now it is grey, when this is true in neither case? This transposition of motives makes me almost doubt whether Lord Byron was thinking so much of the rings on his fingers as his biographer was. These sort of criticisms should be left to women. I am made to wear a little hat, stuck on the top of my head the wrong way. Nay, I commonly wear a large slouching hat over my eyebrows; and if ever I had another, I must have twisted it about in any shape to get rid of the annoyance. This probably tickled Mr. Hunt's fancy, and retains possession of it, to the exclusion of the obvious truism, that I naturally wear 'a melancholy hat.'

I am charged with using strange gestures and contortions of features in argument, in order to 'look energetic.' One would rather suppose that the heat of the argument produced the extravagance of the gestures, as I am said to be calm at other times. It is like saying that a man in a passion clenches his teeth, not because he is, but in order to seem, angry. Why should everything be construed into air and affectation? With Hamlet, I may say, 'I know not *seems*.'

Again, my old friend and pleasant 'Companion' remarks it, as an anomaly in my character, that I crawl about the Fives-Court like a cripple till I get the racket in my hand, when I start up as if I was possessed with a devil. I have then a motive for exertion; I lie by for difficulties and extreme cases. *Aut Cæsar aut nullus*. I have no notion of doing nothing with an air of importance, nor should I ever take a liking to the game of battledoor and shuttlecock. I have only seen by accident a page of the unpublished Manuscript relating to the present subject, which I dare say is, on the whole, friendly and just, and which has been suppressed as being too favourable, considering certain prejudices against me.

In matters of taste and feeling, one proof that my conclusions have not been quite shallow or hasty, is the circumstance of their having been lasting. I have the same favourite books, pictures, passages that I ever had: I may therefore presume that they will last me my life—nay, I may indulge a hope that my thoughts will survive me. This continuity of impression is the only thing on which I pride myself. Even L——, whose relish of certain things is as keen and earnest as possible, takes a surfeit of admiration, and I should be afraid to ask about his select authors or particular friends, after a lapse of ten years. As to myself, any one knows where to have me.

## A FAREWELL TO ESSAY-WRITING

What I have once made up my mind to, I abide by to the end of the chapter. One cause of my independence of opinion is, I believe, the liberty I give to others, or the very diffidence and distrust of making converts. I should be an excellent man on a jury: I might say little, but should starve 'the other eleven obstinate fellows' out. I remember Mr. Godwin writing to Mr. Wordsworth, that 'his tragedy of Antonio could not fail of success.' It was damned past all redemption. I said to Mr. Wordsworth that I thought this a natural consequence; for how could any one have a dramatic turn of mind who judged entirely of others from himself? Mr. Godwin might be convinced of the excellence of his work; but how could he know that others would be convinced of it, unless by supposing that they were as wise as himself, and as infallible critics of dramatic poetry—so many Aristotles sitting in judgment on Euripides! This shows why pride is connected with shyness and reserve; for the really proud have not so high an opinion of the generality as to suppose that they can understand them, or that there is any common measure between them. So Dryden exclaims of his opponents with bitter disdain—

'Nor can I think what thoughts they can conceive.'

I have not sought to make partisans, still less did I dream of making enemies; and have therefore kept my opinions myself, whether they were currently adopted or not. To get others to come into our ways of thinking, we must go over to theirs; and it is necessary to follow, in order to lead. At the time I lived here formerly, I had no suspicion that I should ever become a voluminous writer; yet I had just the same confidence in my feelings before I had ventured to air them in public as I have now. Neither the outcry *for* or *against* moves me a jot: I do not say that the one is not more agreeable than the other.

Not far from the spot where I write, I first read Chaucer's *Flower and Leaf*, and was charmed with that young beauty, shrouded in her bower, and listening with ever-fresh delight to the repeated song of the nightingale close by her—the impression of the scene, the vernal landscape, the cool of the morning, the gushing notes of the songstress,

'And aye, methought she sung close by mine ear,'

is as vivid as if it had been of yesterday; and nothing can persuade me that that is not a fine poem. I do not find this impression conveyed in Dryden's version, and therefore nothing can persuade me that that is as fine. I used to walk out at this time with Mr.



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and Miss L—— of an evening, to look at the Claude Lorraine skies over our heads, melting from azure into purple and gold, and to gather mushrooms, that sprung up at our feet, to throw into our hashed mutton at supper. I was at that time an enthusiastic admirer of Claude, and could dwell for ever on one or two of the finest prints from him hung round my little room; the fleecy flocks, the bending trees, the winding streams, the groves, the nodding temples, the air-wove hills, and distant sunny vales; and tried to translate them into their lovely living hues. People then told me that Wilson was much superior to Claude. I did not believe them. Their pictures have since been seen together at the British Institution, and all the world have come into my opinion. I have not, on that account, given it up. I will not compare our hashed mutton with Amelia's; but it put us in mind of it, and led to a discussion, sharply seasoned and well sustained, till midnight, the result of which appeared some years after in the *Edinburgh Review*. Have I a better opinion of those criticisms on that account, or should I therefore maintain them with greater vehemence and tenaciousness? Oh no! Both rather with less, now that they are before the public, and it is for them to make their election.

It is in looking back to such scenes that I draw my best consolation for the future. Later impressions come and go, and serve to fill up the intervals; but these are my standing resource, my true classics. If I have had few real pleasures or advantages, my ideas, from their sinewy texture, have been to me in the nature of realities; and if I should not be able to add to the stock, I can live by husbanding the interest. As to my speculations, there is little to admire in them but my admiration of others; and whether they have an echo in time to come or not, I have learned to set a grateful value on the past, and am content to wind up the account of what is personal only to myself and the immediate circle of objects in which I have moved, with an act of easy oblivion,

'And curtain close such scene from every future view.'

# THE INFLUENCE OF BOOKS

## ESSAY XXXI

### THE INFLUENCE OF BOOKS ON THE PROGRESS OF MANNERS

—‘*Didicisse fideliter artes  
Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros.*’

Books govern the world better than kings or priests. There have always been plenty of the latter with full and undisputed powers, of which they have made as bad a use as possible. It is only of late that books and public opinion have borne much sway, or that any considerable approaches have been made to civilization and good policy.

Not long ago (being in a country place)<sup>1</sup> I got Sully’s ‘Memoirs’ from a small but well-stocked circulating library, with a view to amuse a leisure hour, and gratify my curiosity with respect to this far-famed courtier and his royal master. I found it absolutely impossible to proceed through half a dozen chapters. Without exaggeration the pages seemed slippery with blood: the ‘Memoirs’ are actually choked up with dead carcasses at every step. The massacre of St. Bartholomew, in which seventy thousand persons were computed to have been slaughtered in one night throughout France,<sup>2</sup> occupies nearly the foreground of the picture. After that, battles, sieges, skirmishes, poisonings, executions of the most vindictive and savage character, occur in every paragraph.

Sickened and disgusted by the details, I flung aside the book, and turned from history to fiction. ‘Egad! I found them both in a story.’ I got Mrs. Radcliffe’s ‘*Sicilian Romance*,’ the plot of which turns on a nobleman of the old school keeping his wife concealed in a subterraneous dungeon for fifteen years, where she is at last discovered wasted away and nearly bereft of reason, by one of her daughters, who inhabit another part of the same mansion. I read it through, however; for fiction, unlike history, has the softenings of fancy and sentiment; and we read on in the hope of something like poetical justice to be done at last, which is more than we can reckon upon in reality. And these, I said, closing the volume, are the ‘good old times,’ which some persons regret with loud lamentation and panic-struck horror at the very thought of innovation. Here are seventy thousand persons murdered in one night in cold

<sup>1</sup> Melrose in Scotland.

<sup>2</sup> In the ‘*Reign of Terror*,’ as the French style it, during the late Revolution, about two thousand perished by the guillotine at Paris.

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blood for a difference of opinion, towns moving as it were in a procession to burn and destroy one another in the same country, princes poisoning each other, noblemen burying their wives alive whenever they take it into their heads to do so, and all this without the least remorse, and with perfect impunity as the order of the day; and yet we see moralists who lift up their hands at Radical Reformers and Modern Philosophy as if they had first 'brought sin into the world with all our woe,' so that, before they were heard of, the whole world had gone on in the innocence and simplicity of the golden age! 'Tis much,' as Sly says. They must indeed be very knaves who pretend this, and verier fools who believe it, when all that is complained of with such deep-mouthed hypocrisy is the loss or diminution of that unbridled power which claimed a right to commit every excess by its own undisputed authority, and treated every resistance to its will as a sacrilege, and when all that is wanted is to get this unhallowed power back again in its swoln and bloated insolence, unsullied by opinion, unchecked by law, deaf to reason and conscience, defying consequences to itself or others, and responsible only to a mockery of religion, to restore which or even the name, the shadow or a dream of it, oceans of tears and rivers of blood have been shed. Will anything bearing the name of King ever forget the time, when the most humble remonstrance against its bigoted and infuriate mandates was construed into treason against 'the divine and human Majesty,' coupled together in that golden chain let down from Heaven; or not breathe its last sigh in a wish to restore it, or make its last convulsive movement in an attempt to clutch the image of an anointed crown? Mr. Canning denied that Legitimacy was the object of the late war, which cost three millions of human lives, but history will refute him, and that pale tablet in St. Peter's, placing a marble crown on a deceased and banished monarch's head, must gleam conviction on every breast, answering a thousand sophistical state-papers. At the time we speak of, Kings and Priests had it all their own way. They had no dread of reforms or revolutions to curdle their blood, or allay the natural sweetness of their dispositions. Their subjects might take the benefit of all the overflowings of their paternal sentiments. There were no heart-burnings or jealousies between them to interrupt the genial current of royal bounty. Whatever violences or cruelties they committed were from their own spontaneous, native, unconstrained impulses. Power lorded it at will, with faith for its strong-sided champion—the people were nothing more than the beasts of the field—the *fiat* of authority was held both by those who issued it, and by those on whom it was denounced, as the act of the Almighty—the possessors of rank and

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privilege were kept in awe neither by law nor public opinion—they had *carte blanche* for whatever they chose to do—and history and romance (its echo or its parrot) tell us the use they made of it. All the efforts of philanthropists and philosophers (since the Press gave an opening for diffusing the light of reason over Europe) have been directed to pare the claws and tame the ravages of this wild beast, arbitrary power, and to transmute the word MIGHT into the word RIGHT. They have so far prevailed, that such scenes as I have alluded to are no longer acted (at least, openly and with approbation), the power to inflict wrong is not confounded in theory as well as practice with the right to do so; and cursed be he who would bring them back again, or arm brute force with the sword of opinion, or cover barefaced oppression with the mantle of impunity!

If I am asked, 'What it is that has produced this change so far, what it is that keeps power in check and humanises the breast?' I answer—Books—books of poetry and philosophy. Some may think that Law ought to be mentioned first; but I should say, No; for law itself is the creature of opinion, and floats on its bosom like 'the swan's down feather on the tide,' or is swayed by it as the waves are agitated and driven by the least breath of Heaven. I believe there is still a law to burn witches. Is it executed? Even the rabble, whose ignorance keeps up their prejudices as pride does those of their superiors, expose themselves to universal execration, by still occasionally acting upon this exploded superstition. A hundred years ago, grave Judges (Sir Matthew Hale) pronounced their sanguinary sentences from the bench against this imaginary crime;<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A question has often been started as to the mode of accounting for the confessions which persons accused of witchcraft have made of their own criminality, or how they could be brought apparently to believe themselves guilty of that of which they must know themselves innocent. It has been suggested that it must be owing either to extreme malignity, making them willing to suppose they had inflicted all the mischiefs laid to their charge, or to extreme vanity, urging them to fancy themselves possessed of extraordinary power, and deservedly objects of fear and enmity to others. I think the solution more simple. These persons themselves, it is to be recollected, believed in witches, according to the common prejudice of the time; and when this common prejudice pointed them out as actually belonging to the class, other circumstances of age, deformity, poverty, and accidental mischiefs in the neighbourhood, and their own punishment, and the general malediction concurring in the same conclusion, it is not wonderful that being also probably persons of weak and half-crazed intellects, they should come into the same opinion, or put an end to the painful struggle in their own breasts by bearing testimony against themselves. They were, in fact, the dupes and victims of their own previous theory; and the horror they would conceive at themselves from the bare possibility of the truth of such an imputation, might tempt them to make some atonement by at once admitting the act. Do we not know the force of sympathy in ordinary cases? Is it not a well-known trick to

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and learned authors (Sir Thomas Brown) enforced the execution with their pens. So slow and difficult is the progress of reason! So gradual the approach to common sense and humanity through that mass of prejudice and folly, which power and bigotry have been for ages raising on the foundation of barbarous ignorance! A few quaint devices (a devil or a cherub's head) are one by one chipped off; a crack, a weather-flaw is now and then discovered in the 'old proud keep' of intolerance and privilege, fenced by 'its double belt of kindred,' ignorance and pride; anon a huge fragment falls, undermined by the engineers, or tottering from its own disproportioned weight;—it is not even now, propped and patched-up by the sword and hireling pens as it has been of late, a regular, entire, and well-cemented building, but has many gaps and mouldering capitals and prostrate columns to show, and will, ere long, tumble an unsightly building to the ground with hideous crash and outcry, and mingle with the common dust, hated, forgotten, or a by-word! Or, if I am

persuade people they are ill, and even to make them so by telling them that they look so? How angry we are at any individual entertaining a bad opinion of us! Yet we should not be so, if this did not in some sort shake our confidence in ourselves. How then shall we stand out against the *bue and cry* of a whole generation? An old woman, whom everybody points out and hates as a witch, who believes in witches, and finds in herself all the other preliminary conditions of that unfortunate sisterhood—age, penury, misery, universal odium, must have strong nerves indeed if her imagination does not take the only remaining step, and confirm the triumph of superstition and malice over her by signing her own condemnation. Lord Byron believed that those who had ever offended him came to no good. If he had been thrown into the Inquisition for bewitching one of his rivals, what would have been the effect upon him? It would have cured him of his whim, because it was only a whim, indulged in out of idle egotism, and when brought home as a serious charge against him, his philosophy and his resentment would have come to the aid of his self-love, to dispel it. But not so, if his faith in such supernatural agency had been a deep and involuntary prejudice, as it was a hundred years ago, and he had found himself like the old woman, without power, without friends, accustomed to receive all his notions from others, and to submit to the will of his superiors, about to be entangled as a victim in his own speculative theory, which, the more formidable were its impending consequences, would only be impressed upon him with the greater vividness. Fancy as easily makes a reality of what we dread, as of what we wish. Cowper the poet thought himself damned because he was in a state of great mental and bodily suffering, and because he believed that millions of other human beings would be damned. The greatness of the evil haunted and overpowered his imagination, and from the force of terror and sympathy with tender consciences, the bare possibility of such an event happening to himself, was converted into a certainty, which embittered his life and hastened his death. It is easy to laugh at the ideas of witchcraft or superstition in the abstract; but if we believe in any such traditions as a general rule, it is hard to prove either to others or ourselves, that we are the exceptions, if appearances are very much against us. Nay, there is a tragic and romantic horror in supposing that we are not, which we are willing to indulge in at the expense of our common sense, our ease, and even our good name.

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not very sanguine of such a result, yet I do not at times altogether despair of it in the course of a few ages more, and while the press, that powerful 'engine at the door,' stands ready, not 'to smite once, and smite no more,' but to repeat the blow till it is no longer needed. I do not see how institutions can for ever exist at war with opinions; and no one will, I should think, maintain that existing institutions are the growth of existing opinions. They are diametrically opposed to one another. Our present opinions and the prevailing tone of society are the result of light and conviction, of the free communication of mind with mind: our institutions (as bottomed on the old, 'time-hallowed' foundations) are the result of darkness and force, of systematic wrong and individual aggrandisement. The one or the other must yield (there can hardly be two standards of moral, any more than of commercial value): and those who hold by prescription do not seem inclined to come to a compromise with reason. There has been some precipitation and violence on one side, and a reaction on the other: but even this pause and temporary suspension of the more liberal principles was abused in the most flagrant manner; and opinions and feelings may be said, as before, *aller leur train*. The way in which books have already battered down so many strongholds of prejudice and power, and must everlastingly militate against violence and wrong, is I think the following.

I need not speak of those things which are merely matters of speculative opinion, or in which reason has only to get the better of ignorance and error in the fair field of argument, in order to be triumphant: I wish to show how it is that books have an influence over manners, and tend to reform the maxims and business of common life, and to bring the excesses of lordly power, and the assumptions of personal consequence, into discredit and disuse. Books, then, teach us (and they alone do it, generally speaking)

'To see ourselves as others see us.'

Or, they may be truly said to 'show vice its own image, scorn its own feature, and the very age and body of the time its form and pressure.' An act of oppression, a stretch of power and authority, are monstrous in themselves; but our self-love, as well as habitual prejudices, blind us to their enormity, which is also screened from the censure of others within the sphere of our local and personal influence, by fear or favour. They dare not, and they will not speak out (otherwise than by 'curses, not loud, but deep'); and we are encouraged in our short-sighted presumption, and repeat our injustice without either remorse or shame. Set this action, this gross, unwarrantable piece of iniquity (and the accompanying absurd and

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selfish pretext to commit it) before the world at large; throw the light of reason upon it; scatter the cobwebs of self-love, of servility, and interest by the breath of public opinion; and the action in question (no longer 'done in a corner') will be seen in its true colours and proportions, and will appear as odious to others, and even to the individual himself, as it is in its own nature. Public opinion, then, is the atmosphere of liberal sentiment and equitable conclusions; books are the scale in which right and wrong are fairly tried; and all false weights or sinister motives being excluded, and the balance placed in the hands of a sufficient number of competent judges, and adjusted by the abstract merits of the case alone, speculative truth necessarily becomes practical justice, the moment it is referred to and enforced by a tribunal which is as powerful as it is impartial and disinterested. Set ten persons to read a book, and nine out of the ten will agree in their opinion of the characters and sentiments; at least so far as to admire any striking traits of generosity, and to condemn any flagrant abuse of power, because neither they, nor anyone immediately belonging to them, is concerned. Remove the veil of self-love, and the sense of right and wrong is neither slow nor dull. But in books, and in a more refined and civilized state of society, everything is subjected to this severe and at the same time imposing ordeal. The mind is habituated to form its taste, and to indulge its likings or antipathies, according to this comprehensive view, and the more humane and enlightened impulse it receives from it; our preposterous pretensions are brought forward, and their grossness and deformity seen through, so that we are ashamed to own them or to act upon them: we learn in the same manner to sympathise in the interests of others, which to the eye of reason prefer just claims, to that of the imagination delightful ones; the private will (warped before by headstrong indulgence and by narrow views) is conformed to the standard of public good, almost without our knowing it; and man becomes by means of his studies, his amusements, and his intellectual attachments, an *ideal* and abstracted, and therefore a disinterested and *reclaimed* character. The reading public—laugh at it as we will, abuse it as we will—is, after all (depend upon it), a very rational animal, compared with a feudal lord and his horde of vassals. In a rude and barbarous age or clime, a man never sees beyond himself or his immediate circle; all beyond that circle is hid, all within it is exaggerated and distorted: his own passions, grounded on selfish and sensual objects, take the lead; he forms his enmities or his friendships by accident or interest: if rich and powerful, he holds the neighbourhood in awe, can bribe by promises, or terrify by threats; if poor, he is the slave of the nearest tyrant, is too ignorant

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to exert his understanding, too dependent to think that his soul is his own ; there is no measure of right and wrong but the strong arm, the bloody hand ; will and passion are the only law, truth is as little known as justice ; the ability to make an injury or an insult good is held a sufficient warrant to commit it, and cruelty and fraud are only counteracted by their own excess, and one scene of profligacy and bloodshed avenged and succeeded by another. I deny that this state of things can continue long after the invention of printing, or the diffusion of letters, or that it must not find its corrective and a more legitimate standard of thinking and acting in science, history, and romance. The owner of a baronial castle could do as he pleased, as long as he had only to account to his tenants, or the inhabitants of the adjacent hamlet, for his unjustifiable proceedings, to crush their feeble opposition, or silence their peevish discontent ; but when public opinion was brought to bear upon his conduct, he could no more stand against it than against a train of artillery placed on the opposite heights to batter down his stronghold, and let daylight into its dark and noisome dungeons. Just so the Modern Philosophy ‘bores through his castle-walls, and farewell LORD !’ Formerly, neither the vassal nor his lord could read or write, and knew nothing but what they suffered or inflicted : now the meanest mechanic can both read and write, and the only danger seems to be that every one, high and low, rich and poor, should turn author, and the whole world be converted into waste paper. We need not, however, be under much alarm on this head, as we can very well afford to be removed by a few more centuries or revolutions of the great social wheel from St. Bartholomew’s Eve, from the scenes in Sully, or in Mrs. Radcliffe’s romances !

An ignorance of common topics, want of intercourse, of arts, and commerce, formerly kept up as great a separation, and as rancorous an hostility, between different towns and provinces, as at present is found to subsist between remote kingdoms and rival nations with different languages, names and laws. Hence we find the inhabitants of the same country, even when at peace with foreign states, constantly torn with convulsions and discord at home, split into furious factions, and waging deadly war upon each other from their several cities and places of strength, like so many lairs of wild beasts. The persecutions, hatreds, heart-burnings, and fanaticism of different sects in earlier times, arose from the same cause ; the being made ignorantly to believe that the final salvation of all men depended on some boasted article of faith, which, in consequence, became a bone of fierce contention, and set the whole Christian world together by the ears. A circulating library (chosen for the amusement of the many, not to



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suit the sullen dogmatism of a few) sets all this to rights by spreading larger and more liberal views of things, and showing the infinite variety of opinions on all subjects in all ages and nations. We thus retrace the history of the species, and mark and correct the self-willed errors of the human intellect. Books are 'a discipline of humanity,' a kind of public monitor, a written conscience, from which nothing is hid: the councils of princes, 'the secrets of the grave,' are brought before it, arraigned and made to stand or fall by their own merits. The consciousness that this is the general language and means of communication throughout the civilised world, gives strength and boldness to it; and there is nothing that is not more or less amenable either to the rules or the verdict of this formidable tribunal. Power, interest could at one time easily overawe and stifle the scattered and imperfect impression of popular feeling; but from the moment that it obtained the assistance of the press as its organ, it became an over-match or a dangerous antagonist to its hated rival. By a habit of reflection and abstraction, rank and station are stripped of their imposing physical attributes, and reduced to the value and importance that they must be supposed to retain in the eye of reason and philosophy. Let anyone, for instance, read the history of the Kings of England, and he will no longer think in his heart that a King of England can do no wrong. The reigning monarch may even suffer from the comparison, unless he has learned to measure himself in the same glass, and has risen in dignity (instead of going retrograde) with the information of his subjects. Who is there that seeing the part of Henry VIII. represented on the stage, bloated in vice and person, is not disposed to hiss him from it? Therefore, no sovereign, however inclined, can (with this preconception in the public mind) play the part of Henry VIII. over again, without running some risk of being hooted from the throne. *Veluti in Speculum*, is the motto of the stage and of the world, as the latter is instructed by it. Let anyone apply himself to read the history of the Popes, or of the Jesuits, or the Inquisition; and then see what his opinion of priestcraft will be. Therefore this class of persons must either change their tone and lower their pretensions, or they would be obliged to sneak out of society altogether. As it is, we almost laugh in their faces. Who that reads the description of an Eastern fanatic rushing into an apartment half naked, and with a huge serpent twisted round his neck, pretending to be inspired by some god, or of the bags of vermin presented by the wretched Mexicans, as a symbolical tribute to their arbitrary sovereigns,<sup>1</sup> does not in his soul loath and abhor, and feel his very stomach

<sup>1</sup> See the Notes to 'Ada Reis.'

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turn at the names of superstition and despotism? Some of our political jugglers would by 'a cantrip slight' persuade us that there is no such thing; with which view Mr. Colman struck the word 'Tyrant' out of Mr. Shiel's play, as if something personal was intended by it; nor can we with safety contradict them on the spot, but by enlarging our studies and shifting the scene—'modo me pone Thebis, modo Athenis'—we find absolutely that there are such things abroad, and may be at home, in spite of such respectable authority. Let any action of extreme generosity be represented in a work of fiction, who will be callous enough to show his indifference to it? Let any action of extreme baseness be exhibited in like manner, who will be bold enough to avow his approbation of it, or not revolt at the idea of identifying himself with the character? But must not this exercise of the mind, or the habit of judging actions and characters, as it were, under feigned names (where no false or improper passion lurks) be highly favourable to the tone of private sentiment and public morals? We thus not only learn to appreciate the worth of others justly and satisfactorily, but we unconsciously form a standard for our own conduct, long before we come to act. We can hardly in this case belie all our favourite theories, or fly in the face of our own repeated declarations, or cancel the bond of our integrity, after having set our hands and seals to it. Again, what do not our domestic manners owe to such writers as the Spectator and Rambler? Has not ridicule driven our fops and bullies off the stage of common life? Did not the bag-wig and sword disappear as soon as education and knowledge threw down the exclusive barriers of rank and birth, and when manners, not dress, became the characteristic distinction of a gentleman? Has not rational conversation after dinner nearly cured the English of the love of drinking? And after that, what miracles have we not a right to expect? I conceive I am not far from the truth in hazarding the conjecture that the translation of the Bible was one great lever of English liberty, and that the English and Scotch Covenanters and Reformers thus drank of that spirit, and made that application of scriptural events and prophecies which led to the struggles in the cause of civil and religious freedom, and laid the foundation of our Constitutional Government, and of the principles of the Revolution which have not yet been formally disclaimed. The old Dissenters, indeed, I look upon as the nursing fathers of our liberties; and their stern and sullen opposition to church dogmas and arbitrary sway is perhaps ill-exchanged for the prevailing fashionable laxity, lukewarmness, and scepticism, in relation both to our civil and ecclesiastical polity.

I have myself never met among uneducated people (men or women)

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with the smallest regard to the principles of truth or justice, or to anything but their own interest or inclination or the prevailing opinion of the day. On the other hand, that licentiousness of manners is the inevitable growth of refinement, or that virtue is the sister of ignorance, I am not convinced, and I do not believe. If we look into the manners of the Middle Ages or of the most barbarous countries, we shall not find them the most pure or unexceptionable. Froissart represents the knights and warriors of his day as sitting at some grand public festival with each a lady on his knee, whom they courted *par amours*. Books are not necessary to teach vice and profligacy. I have lived a good deal in the country, and I can speak from my own knowledge that there is as much intrigue (with more scandal) going on in a provincial town as in the metropolis, and that the most retired and obscure villages are as far from the simplicity and innocence of the pastoral ages as they are from the luxury and intellectual refinements of civilised life.<sup>1</sup> Or grant that there were such a disagreeable alternative attending the progress of opinion and diffusion of knowledge, that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil still bore fruit both sweet and bitter,—shall we take all the evil and none of the good? Or if we must have, according to a great authority, ‘*either vice or misery*,’ yet why should we volunteer to have both? If we cannot purify private manners, shall we not correct public abuses? Let us make the most of the spirit of our times. We may direct, but we cannot arrest the progress of knowledge. Let us not unite the disadvantages of barbarism and refinement. We may rekindle the fires of Smithfield, but not the zeal which burnt as bright as they. We may have servility without loyalty, hypocrisy without religion, and all the miseries of a rude and savage state of society without any of its hardihood, enterprise or romance, just as some modern writers affect the hobbling metre and quaint conceits of our ancestors, but without retaining a particle of their manly force and spirit. We cannot go back to what we were; and in pretending to keep old usages when the prejudice that sanctified them is gone, we are at once fools and cowards. We might with equal reason set up for North American savages, as attempt to restore the age of chivalry, or become the loyal and religious subjects we were two hundred years ago. We can never be ourselves again, as long as the world lasts—let us try to be something better. Tyranny and bigotry are the same they ever were; we have seen what havoc they made when left

<sup>1</sup> I might suggest here an observation that has sometimes occurred to me, that the art of printing gives us an advantage in point of decency over the ancients, whose writings were circulated in manuscript, and could hardly be said to meet the public eye; and certainly smut and scandal are more conveniently transmitted through the crooked channels of oral and private tradition, than when they dare to face the light of day.

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to themselves, and had everything their own way; and they would still have it so if they could. Are they not still at their old work as far as they dare—striving to continue every exclusive privilege and invidious distinction as they formerly strove to usurp and extend them? Not a thing will they suffer to pass unresisted, undegraded, that is recommended by reason: they think that reason is always against them, and they are always against it. If we look back to former periods, do we not find them uniformly opposing every reform, every liberal measure and principle—wreaking their fury on it in the first instance, and shrinking with cowardly malignity before it as it gathers strength, and at last making a merit of granting what they can no longer prevent by force or cunning? Their object is to gain time and put off the evil day; and no wonder, since the interests of the many are necessarily incompatible with the prescriptive and lordly advantages of the few. When we find kings and priests running before public opinion, urging moderation, inquiry, reform, making common cause with the wise and good, and detaching themselves from the interested and powerful, then it will be soon enough to believe that their temper and principles have changed with the times, that they are to be trusted like other men, and that the side on which they are found is no longer a sure sign that the lovers of truth and freedom ought to be on the opposite one. The Quarterly Review some time back made a triumphant peroration (after a detailed and elaborate survey of the growing prosperity of the country) to show that neither the Crown nor its Ministers nor Parliament nor the Clergy nor Gentry had anything to do with it, but that they remained just as they were, and that all these astonishing improvements in every other department had taken place in spite of them. So it is, and so it will be. ‘To do aught good will never be the task’ of those who profit by its contrary. They will always stand in the way, and oppose the *vis inertiae* of custom and indolence (at least) to every project of amelioration and reform, just as the proprietor of an old house or rotten tenement holds out against the improvement of a street or city: but it was reserved for the zeal and acuteness of the Quarterly Review to make a merit of this. After all, princes have no great reason to complain. They as well as their subjects have benefited by the consolidation of opinion and the progress of manners: if they have less power, it is more secure, and they are not as formerly in danger of having their throats cut every time they lay their heads upon their pillows, or of being poisoned in every goblet of wine they taste. How far the ultimate tendency of reason and philosophy may be in their favour, I cannot pretend to say; but they do not seem disposed to let it come to that issue, and are obviously determined either to be what they are, or not at all!

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## ESSAY XXXII

### TRAVELLING ABROAD

‘Ha! here’s three of us are sophisticated.’—*Lear*.

I AM one of those who do not think that much is to be gained in point either of temper or understanding by travelling abroad. Give me the true, stubborn, unimpaired John Bull feeling, that keeps fast hold of the good things it fancies in its exclusive possession, nor ever relaxes in its contempt for foreign frippery and finery. What is the use of keeping up an everlasting *see-saw* in the imagination between brown-stout and *vin ordinaire*, between long and short waists, between English gravity and French levity? ‘The home-brewed, the home-baked, the home-spun, ‘dowlas, filthy dowlas for me’! What, in short, do we obtain by the contrary method of vain and vexatious comparison, but jealousy of the advantages of others, but dissatisfaction with our own? Why is it that the French are so delighted with themselves? They never quit Paris. Why do they talk so fast? French is the common language of Europe. Man was made to stay at home—(why else are there so many millions born who never dreamt of stirring from it?)—to vegetate, to be rooted to the earth, to cling to his local prejudices, to luxuriate in the follies of his forefathers. At present, we resemble a set of exotics and fine, sickly plants tossed and tumbled about in flower-pots and rickety cases from shore to shore—not like our native oaks, sturdy, vigorous, gnarled, growing to the soil—‘but now a wood is come to Dunsinane’; and clouds of English hover on the steam-deck and alight upon the strand. Why, the sun shone just as bright, and this earth of ours rolled round, and the peasant toiled ‘in the eye of Phœbus, and all night slept in Elysium—’

—‘next day after dawn,  
Did rise and help Hyperion to his horse :  
And follow’d so the ever-running year  
With profitable labour to his grave’—

long before this sailing of steam-boats and starting of *Diligences*, this cracking of whips and rattling of wheels, this exposing of folly and acquiring of taste was heard of. We now seem to exist only where we are not—to be hurrying on to what is before us, or looking back to what is behind us, never to be fixed to any spot or settled to any employment. We dart like the dragon-fly to and fro on the surface of the map, in quest of our insect, glittering prey, and exhibit a picture

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of impatience, insignificance, and irritability. Formerly, an English country-gentleman was like the genius of the woods, enclosed in the heart of one of his hereditary oaks : in the present day he approaches nearer to a moody spirit, wandering from one end of Europe to the other, in search of rest, and finding none. Enough, enough. Return, ye Absentees—Mr. Macculloch will not prevent you ! Break up, ye Traveller's-Club, nor longer bestride the world with one foot of the compasses stuck in Pall Mall, and the other at Rome ! Your country can do without your straggling ubiquity !

Dr. Johnson remarked long ago how little addition was made to the conversation of sensible men by foreign travel. Pedants and *petits-mâtres* indeed are always taken up with what they think nobody knows but themselves. It has been proposed as a problem to ascertain whether the slightest trace could be discovered of any impression whatever made on French art by the works of the Italian and other great painters during the fourteen or fifteen years that they remained among them—it is true, the having the Greek statues in their possession seemed to confirm and encourage them in all their faults. They smiled to see the resemblance between a marble statue and their own style of painting ; and thought that ' if 'twere painted, 'twould be twice as fine.' Antique symmetry and elegance only wanted a modern French aid added to it, to be perfect ! Thus we turn away from the lessons afforded to our vanity, or want of taste, and merely attend to what flatters the original disease or superficial bias of our minds. We learn nothing from others, for we see nothing in them but the reflection of our self-love. Not a particle of advance is made, even in our so often boasted candour and liberality. We contrive with all our liberality and candour to *turn the flank* of their virtues and to circumvent their good qualities by some insidious concession or crafty innuendo in such a manner as to convert them into an indirect compliment to ourselves. *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*. If we praise them, it is with a lukewarm mental reservation, and we are studying all the time how, with the assistance of a BUT or an IF, we may retract the cowardly donation. Liberality begins and ends at home. It is not a neighbourly accomplishment. Or all its professions are verbal, affected, strained, without vital heat or efficacy in them. We make a great gulp to swallow down our prejudices, resolve to be magnanimous, and say,—Come, let us acknowledge the plain truth ; the French do not get drunk, they do not rob, nor do they murder people for their money. We do not think one bit the better of them for this triple certificate of merit and absolution from moral turpitude, but of ourselves for our condescension in granting it. We are convinced there must be something in the background, behind the

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scenes, to make up for such plausible appearances. We are twisting the thing about somehow, in some secret corner of our hearts, to prove that all these negative recommendations show a want of spirit, of nerve, of hardihood, are effeminate and sneaking, the virtues of women. Like the patriotic Judge in the time of Queen Elizabeth, who accounted for the comparative honesty of the Scotch in the same way, we say that the French do not commit so many robberies as we do, because 'they have not such *good hearts*.'<sup>1</sup> We pique ourselves, above all things, on not being a set of milksops. Then as to the murders abroad, though they are few, they are so strange and unnatural when they do happen, such as husbands killing their wives, mothers their daughters, &c. A perusal of the *Causes célèbres* fully satisfies the English reader of the total want of natural affection among the French. As to our drunkenness, as far as this practice still sticks to us as a national reproach, the truth is, 'we would not change that fault (great as it is) for their best virtue.' All our acknowledgments on this head are essentially insincere, lip-deep, and at bottom so many ingenious and sidelong compliments to ourselves. The egotism of a whole people is proof both against conviction and shame.

It is not so, if we can discover any clue, any hint, any loophole to find fault. 'Oh! most small fault, how ugly in another dost thou show!' We are then keen enough on the scent, and 'stand like greyhounds on the slips, ready to start away.' If a servant inadvertently leaves a door open at night, her defence that there is no danger stands her or her nation in no stead,—we are furious at the carelessness of French servants, and forget the implied reproof to ourselves that we come from a place where such carelessness might be fatal. What monstrous injustice! We turn the circumstance over in our minds, and with a little tampering and sophistry, it comes out to be owing not to any goodness in the national character, but to the greater security and arbitrariness of the police, which is all in our favour, and we are once more on the right side. This view of the subject is a mighty relief to our feelings, which were beginning to be hurt at there being no chance of our having our throats cut while we slept, even though the doors were left open on purpose. 'But then look at our liberty,' as Mr. Peel says—charming liberty of being knocked on the head or of knocking others on the head and being hanged for it! The English claim a chartered right to be *blackguards*, and this is all they care for. But if a French marquis filches a table-spoon or pockets a reckoning, then joy to the English! The jubilee and the rejoicing is great. It is clear from thenceforward that the

<sup>1</sup> Meaning *stout* or *bold* ones.

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French are a despicable, worthless nation, and the English are 'all honourable men.' One argues that the titled offender ought to have been pumped upon as 'a great moral lesson'; while another traces it to the corruption of the old privileged orders in France, among whom every meanness and profligacy could be practised with impunity, and consequently all sense of honour and decency was lost. On the same principle we are ready to account for the magnificence of the saloons in Paris, and for the dog-holes of kitchens into which they thrust their servants, that is, from the aristocratic pride and pomp of the great, and their utter disregard for the comfort of the lower classes as of an inferior species, according to the old system; but if it is suggested that these same servants may, by the custom of the place, come into the room with you, or sit in an anti-room through which you have occasion to pass, then *our* aristocratic prejudices take the alarm, and begin to be uneasy in their seats. So ill qualified are we to judge of others or ourselves! If things are dirty abroad there is a great outcry: if they are nice, it is so much the worse. What nonsense! What false refinements! What trifling and effeminacy! Foreign smells are less intolerable than foreign perfumes. I heard it asserted the other day that French snuff was inferior to English, as if this circumstance re-established the national character, and all their variety of scents and modes of taking it were mere affectation and pretence. We do not like another's house the better for being finer than our own, nor a country either. It is an insult on our ordinary ideas. The country-squires and neighbouring dames went away grumbling and sulky from the ostentatious finery of Fonthill Abbey, and no doubt talked a great deal about real comfort when they got home. The French ask, If everything is so disagreeable to us abroad, why do we come? Or, having come, why do we stay? And the plea seems unanswerable. I get into a great many scrapes by maintaining that the mutton is good in Paris—a paradox which is deemed worthy of expatriation. A girl in the *Diligence* coming along was very angry the first day because the dinner was bad, there was not a thing she could eat, she was sorry she had ever come to such a country, she would go back again immediately, &c.; the next day the breakfast was admirable, this made her more angry than ever, so many things she did not know which to choose, she hated such a quantity thrown away, and she would touch nothing out of spite and vexation that her former predictions did not continue to be made good. We can forgive anything sooner than a real superiority over us. We would thankfully, joyfully put up with every inconvenience, annoyance, abomination, while from home, to go back with a thorough conviction of our taking the lead of all the rest of the



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world, in the arts and elegancies of life. Our greatest enemies are those who rob us of our good opinion of ourselves !

An acquaintance of mine is settled in a French boarding-house. What scenes we have (fit to make us die with laughter) in going over the messes and manners of the place ! How we exult in the *soup-maigre* ! How we triumph in the *bouillé*, as hard as a bullet ! If a single thing were good, it would ruin us for the evening. Then the knives will not cut—and what a thing to set down a single fowl before six people, who seem all ready to fall upon it and tear it in pieces ! What meanness and wretched economy ! Why don't they get a good substantial joint of meat, in which there would be *cut and come again* ? If they had common sense they would. And then the lamentable want of decency and propriety is another never-failing and delightful topic. The child is unswaddled before company, and the dirty clothes for the next week's wash are left stewing in the window all dinner-time. The master is such a Goth too, a true Frenchman ! When carving he flourishes his knife about in such a manner as to endanger those who sit near him, and stops in the middle with the wing of a duck suspended on the point of his fork, to spout a speech out of some play. Dinner is no sooner over than he watches his opportunity, collects all the bottles and glasses on the table, beer, wine, porter, empties them into his own, heaps his plate with the remnants of fricassees, gravy, vegetables, mustard, melted butter, and sops them all up with a large piece of bread, wipes his plate clean as if a dog had licked it, dips his bread in some other dish that in his hurry had escaped him, and finishes off by picking his teeth with a sharp-pointed knife. He then, having satisfied his most urgent wants, amuses himself during the desert by putting salt in the governess's fruit, and giving a pinch of snuff to a cat which is seated in his lap with a string of beads round its neck. What exquisite refinement ! Surely, the English are a century behind the French in civilisation and politeness ! Is it not worth while to run the gauntlet of a French boarding-house, to pay a hundred and sixty francs a month, and be starved, poisoned, talked, stung to death, to arrive at so consoling a reflection ? It may be said that this is a vulgar Frenchman in a low rank of life : I answer that there is no such character in any rank of life in London—who spouts Shakespear one moment, the next picks his teeth with his fork, and then sticks it in a potatoe to help you to it !

There are four charges that I would seriously bring against the French, and that they themselves are not prepared to repel, for they do not expect them : the want of politeness, the want of imagination, the want of liberality, and the want of grace. All this, being con-

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trary to first appearances and received opinion, may seem to require proof, and it may have it thus :

First, as to the want of politeness, the French are deficient in it for this reason, that they have no sense of pain, no nervous or (if you will) morbid sensibility, and consequently can have little delicacy. They aim at the agreeable, I grant, and succeed ; but they have no idea of the disagreeable, and therefore take no pains to avoid giving offence. They consider everything of this kind as a whim of the English. A Frenchman coughs in your face and spits on the floor. He runs up against you in the street, not to affront you, for he very politely begs your pardon, but because he thinks of nothing but himself, and never anticipates the shock which he may give you. For myself, English-like, as one whom disagreeable contingencies meet half-way and follow hard upon, if I see a person coming at the other end of the street, I am not easy till I have taken my own side of the pavement, lest it should be thought possible I do not mean to take it. At the same time, I contradict another bluntly and argue a point, tenaciously, which a Frenchman would not do. A French traveller will thrust his body out of a coach-window if there is anything he wishes to see, and keep all the air from you as if the coach were his own property, because he has a pleasure in looking out, and it never once enters his head that you have any objection to being stifled. On the same principle, he takes his dog into the coach with him—he has not the shadow of a conception how either he or his dog can be offensive to the most delicate organs ! French politeness consists in officiousness and complaisance ; they are quick in seeing what will please, and ready to oblige when the way is pointed out to them ; they do not idly torment themselves, nor knowingly persist in giving pain to others. They incline to make the best of things, are easy-tempered, conciliating, affable, have no stubbornness nor haughty reserve, nor do they gnaw their hearts out like the English, about what does or does not concern them, and vent their accumulated bile upon their neighbours. A proof of the natural sociability of the French has been taken from this, that they cannot exist as new settlers in the woods of North America, where they can find no one to talk to or admire but themselves. A Frenchman's ideas rise so fast to the surface, that unless he can communicate them immediately, they strike inward, and produce a most uncomfortable kind of melancholy. Flattery and compliments are one great ingredient in French manners. You are most secure on the side of their vanity, for this faculty is tolerably alert in them, and they are less apt to wound than of others from being a little sore themselves. Yet this is not always the case, as they are so well fortified in their own good opinion, that they do

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not very well believe how you can be staggered in yours, or put out of countenance by trifling mortifications.

Secondly, as to imagination, it must be allowed that they are woefully at a loss in this respect. The French, taken as a nation, have no idea of anything but what is French. They are too well pleased with themselves to be at the trouble of going out of themselves. Vanity and imagination are two incompatible qualities. This is one reason of their dislike to drunkenness. It puts them quite beside themselves, and disturbs that natural intoxication and smooth flow of the animal spirits in which they delight to contemplate their own image as in a glass. A drunken man is no longer a Frenchman. His consciousness of himself and others is gone. I wonder what a Frenchman's dreams are made of—there is no trace of them in his poetry—there is nothing there but *idées nettes*. An instance of their inherent want of imagination was, that when they had got the Apollo Belvidere in their possession, they declared it was 'to remain there for ever.' They could not conceive a change in the affairs of the world possible; the present moment, the present object is with them the whole of time and space. So, if you have no money in your pocket, they are in despair, and think you never can have any; if you bring out a bag full of crowns, they will go away with part of their demand, or even without any of it, as well satisfied as if you had paid the whole. They had no notion how the Russians should burn Moscow. Paris is, in their apprehension, the whole of the universe, and they conceive of those who live out of it, as breathing an atmosphere of barbarism. They have a certain respect for the English as having beat them—they think this is owing to some superiority in our Jack-tars, and that Paris is not a seaport! When David was looking round at some *chef-d'œuvres* of Annibal Caracci in the Louvre, he said, 'We thought these pictures fine once!' He looked for the traces of his own style in them, and saw that they were farther and farther removed from that.

Thirdly, the French 'want grace, who never wanted wit.' Grace is not composed of angles. A French woman walks as if she had tender feet. She does not walk, but fidget and shuffle along like a fantoccini figure on a board. I have heard an excellent judge describe the late Queen of France as gliding across an antichamber where he stood to see her, coming in with her large hoop sideways, as if she was borne on a cloud. This was, no doubt, the perfection of the thing, but the ordinary practice is deficient. I deny that a wriggle, however quick or light, or erect, is grace. At the same time, I allow that the English women in Paris (even those of quality) look like country-people in London. Yet the French women look

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well in London. They have not the same vacant stare, the same improgressiveness, or want of quicksilver in their heels. The French have too sudden a jerk in their movements, and keep their muscles too tight and too incessantly at work, while the English seem as if their bodies were a burthen to them, and only move their joints to get forward. They have no elasticity or firmness. *There are faults on both sides.* Anyone may mimic the common French walk by twisting and tripping and ambling on tiptoe; but real grace is not to be caricatured. If I want to know what real grace is, I ask myself, How the Venus de Medicis would move from her pedestal? Not like a French woman, but like —. The glide of a serpent is graceful, that is, voluminous and expansive. French grace is a dextrous, artificial substitute for the real thing, taught by walking along the dirty, slippery streets of Paris. Grace is made up of curved lines, of continuous, undulating movements; but with the French all is discontinuous, pointed, angular. They are light and airy, it is true; and are borne along by their good spirits, with apparent ease and confidence in themselves, which is so far better than our lumpish, clod-hopping, slouching gait. We are in all respects a contradiction to each other; but it does not follow that either is perfect. The English seem made of pure earth: the French have more air mixed with their clay, the Italians more fire, the Germans more water. Yet the heavy, phlegmatic Germans have invented clocks, gunpowder, the art of printing, and the art of oil-painting. What have the other nations of the modern world to bring against these four things?—The French pretend to set the fashions to their neighbours. They laugh at us for our caps and bonnets as *outré* and *d'un mauvais goût*, though we borrowed this bad taste from them a year or two before!

Fourthly, to complete this tissue of charges against French manners, they are full of *tracasserie*, of trick and low cunning; they are a thorough 'nation of shopkeepers.' All their *bombomnie* and complaisance are at an end, as soon as their interest is concerned. They are rude or polite, just as they think they can make most by it. A French gentleman travelling in company with others, gets a cup of coffee at a little shop for three-halfpence, and laughs at you for paying two francs for a bad breakfast at the inn. They demand payment for board and lodging beforehand, which shows either a grasping disposition or a want of confidence. Besides, you cannot depend on them for a moment. A restless inconsequentiality runs through all they do. They seem naturally desirous of escaping from obligations of every kind. If they cut a throat, it is that of some relation from being *ennuyé* with a repetition of the same intercourse—*toujours*

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*perdrix*. If you make a bargain with them and someone else comes and offers them a *sous* more, they take it, and smile at your disappointment, or pretend not to have understood you. If they can impose on you for once, they think it a wonderful achievement, and consider the loss of your custom nothing. This would be looking too far forward. Therefore, they can never be a commercial people; for commerce has a long memory and long hands.<sup>1</sup>

To return to our own good folks. Really, it is not surprising that they meet with the sort of *accueil* they do, that they are surrounded and stared at and made a prize of like some outlandish beast cast upon hostile shores. Instead of having arrived by the usual conveyances, they might be supposed to have been thrown out of a balloon, or to have dropped from the clouds, they are so stunned, and shocked, and stupefied, and jammed all together, without any variety of character or appearance. There is no perceptible difference between the lord and the commoner, the lady and her maid. A pert French *soubrette* going along laughs at them both alike. Traveling, like Death, levels all distinctions. 'The toe of the citizen treads on the courtier's heel, and galls his kibe.' We are all *hail-fellow-well-met*. The difference is not worth the counting. It is as if one great personification of John Bull had been suspended over the Continent, and had been dashed to the ground in a thousand fragments, all bruised and senseless alike. A galvanic process is necessary to restore us to life. The national character is fastened to our shoulders like a pedlar's pack. It is in vain for anyone to think of holding up his head, of straightening his back, of quickening his step, or unloosing his tongue—we are still outdone in all these particulars by the French, who appear a forward antithesis to us; and we turn back to join the *awkward squad* of our countrymen, and make common cause with them. What signify our poor individual pretensions, if we see a whole nation having the start of us, and

<sup>1</sup> French rogues are cheats, not thieves. French honesty arises not perhaps from the love of justice, but from a repugnance to violence or force. They are a complaisant people, and would not rob you without first asking your consent, and making you an accomplice in your own wrong. There is no rudeness done to the will in this, when it is previously won over to their side, and you are the ready dupe of their artifice and *finesse*. There is a vanity as well as love of gain concerned in this. The French will make a fool of you for nothing, and will hardly be prevailed upon to take your goods except by stratagem. Besides, they have a less rude grasp of external objects, less tenaciousness of property and substantial comforts than the English:—they live more upon air. They make consummate sharpers from their quickness, and indifference. Farther south, the natives rob out of laziness and impudence united, and are very alert in this respect. 'Know, Signor Santillane,' says the bravo in *Gil Blas*, 'that when the question is to carry off the goods of another, I have the strength of Hercules.'

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determined to keep it? No! no one professes to be any better than his neighbours; or if he does step forward to distinguish himself with a vapid air of assurance, he is soon put back. Like a clown in company, who forgets all his jokes, one would suppose there had been no such thing as wit or humour in England, because a French barber is unacquainted with it; we veil our proud pretensions to the genius of French grimace—in pure sheepishness and *mauvaise honte*, we give up Fielding and Congreve as dull Englishmen, or raw beginners; Prior's Chloë was a dowdy, and Waller's Sacharissa a mistake! But to make some amends, we have a *corps de réserve* to retire upon in our wisdom and our courage, in our Newton and our Locke (Shakespeare we are shy of bringing forward), in our trade and commerce, our religion and government; and every one on these acknowledged premises struts a hero and a sage. Then all our men are honest and all our women virtuous, and not like the French. In London there are no rogues, prostitutes, sharpers, or the rest of it. We persuade ourselves that we are just the reverse of all that we would be thought to hate or despise in others. We mix up our foibles and our virtues, our dulness and our vanity, our wisdom and our valour very kindly in the same dish, and, like people out at sea in a boat in the last extremity, each fancies himself entitled to an equal share in the common lot! Can anything be more unfriendly than this state of the exacerbation of our private and public prejudices, in which everything is transposed and distorted in the mere spirit of contradiction to a just estimate either of ourselves or others?

We feel at a loss abroad, or (in the common phrase) like fish out of water, because nobody takes much notice of or knows anything about us. But is it not the same in going into any country-town in England? Does a deputation wait upon us from the principal inhabitants when we arrive by the coach at Birmingham or Coventry? An Englishman has so far more honour out of his own country, where he is (as Cowley expresses it) 'a species by himself,' and entitled to some distinction as a novelty or non-descript. But in the one case we feel at home, and do not care about the people in a provincial town taking no notice of us, because we know they are no better than we: in a foreign country we are not quite so sure of this, and the indifference of others becomes connected with a dread of insignificance on our part. In London we have common topics and common amusements, as inhabitants of the same great city; and the *esprit de cocagne* in some measure qualifies and carries off petty chagrins and individual slights. What adds to the feeling of littleness, dissipation, and vulgarity in Paris, is that you are taken up only with the present, passing objects—the shops, the houses, the

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dirt, the finery, the walks, the people, dogs, and monkeys: in London, that is, at home, you have unavoidably certain associations with the past, and the metropolis gradually grows and emerges out of its original obscurity in 'the mind's eye.' The house here in the Rue de Chancercine, where Bonaparte alighted after the battle of Marengo, is hardly known. It is the order of the day to efface the memory of their short-lived greatness. There is a tendency in the mind to know causes and consequences—without which it grows restive and impatient. The immediate object torn out of its place in the order of events at least does not satisfy the mind of an Englishman. We have not faith, we have not interest in it. This is the reason of the sense of listlessness, of fretfulness, and disgust whenever we are thrown into a crowd, particularly at a distance from home. We are then more at fault than ever. Yet why must we be in the secret, in the cabinet-council of passing events? Are they not to go on without us? Must our desire to interfere, or curiosity to know the exact truth, stop their progress? Can we not look at the frontispiece and be pleased with it, without reading the book? Cannot a French milliner sit in a shop gracefully, and with every attention to propriety, without asking our leave, or first satisfying us whether the change from slatternliness to neatness, from coquetry to modesty, is real or apparent? Oh! it is wretched, this importunate humour of making ourselves the pivot on which the whole world turns round. Strain and swell out our self-importance as we will, it is but a point in comparison with the sum of things. How do foreigners get on in our absence? We find them just the same when we return. The English are not the sun that shines on France. How did they manage before we were born, in the times of Madame de Pompadour and Madame La Valière? Were the court beauties to wait to know our pleasure, before they gave their answers to Louis xiv. or Louis xv.? Madame de Sevigné wrote very pretty letters, though the New Monthly Magazine was not then in existence! One would think at first that reading and reflection would cure this teasing disposition; and yet, by giving us a kind of factitious interest and omnipresence in such cases, it mixes us up with everything again, and confirms our original egotism, as if we had a right to be consulted and to give our opinion on what thus passes in review before us. Nature is incorrigible—there is no crevice so small or intricate at which our self-love will not contrive to creep in. *Naturam expellas furcâ, usque recurret!* The only alternative to be pursued in these circumstances is to visit Paris with all the ignorance, simplicity, and disposition to admire with which Sir Francis Wronghead and his family came up to London; or to

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go abroad spitting our spite at every stage, and determined to condemn in the lump, like Matthew Bramble;—the half-way course between of questioning and criticising and accounting for everything, is intolerable.

Come then, and let us away from all this cabal and impertinence, and let us cross the Alps. Pictures, ruins, mountains, defy this petty personality and painful jealousy. They are abstractions of the mind. With the first sight of Mont Blanc you leave yourself behind, and travel through a romance—in a waking dream of the distant and the past. Who, in crossing Mount Cenis, thinks of Tottenham Court Road? Who, in the Louvre or the Vatican, is jealous of the claims of native art? Who, in the streets of Turin or Ferrara, does not find himself at home—in the home of early imagination, in the palaces and porticoes of high-sounding thought? Here the whole impression tells for itself—simple, entire, majestic—and has no drawback of invidious, cowardly comparison. What we have read of in books, or had glimpses of in fancy, ‘those brave, sublunary things,’ handed down from age to age, and wrought into our memory, these form part of ourselves, and we have no uneasiness on that head. Here fame triumphs over envy, the great over the little. There is here nothing that can be connected with upstart pretension or personal competition, or the fashion of the hour:—all speaks of the past, of glory departed, of the races that are gone, and between whom and us the grave has placed a lofty barrier. Their cities are the cities of the dead—from their mouldering battlements the faces of the rugged warrior still look out. Sometimes, as I gaze upon the dying embers in my room, the ruddy streaks and nodding fragments shape themselves into an Italian landscape, and Radicofani rises in the distance, receding into the light of setting suns, that seem bidding the world farewell for ever from their splendour, their pomp, and the surrounding gloom! Or Perugia opens its cloistered gates, and I look down upon the world beneath, and Foligno and Spoleto stretch out their dark groves and shining walls behind me! You seem walking in the valley of the shadow of life; *ideal* palaces, groves, and cities (realised to the bodily sense) everywhere rise up before you—‘The earth hath bubbles as the water hath, and these are of them!’ You scale the heavens or descend into the tomb; but you are always taken out of yourself, and view objects by the twilight of history. You have no more to do with the present race of people than in perusing an old book; you and they are alike spectators of the mighty scene—their country is the inheritance of the imagination!—In Switzerland, on the other hand, the magnitude of the objects, as well as the quiet and seclusion of the customary modes of



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life, annihilates all personal reflections. If you fall from the top of one of those crags, you will break your neck whether you are a Frenchman or an Englishman—in the valley below, you may exclaim without much affectation—‘Vain pomp and glory of the world, I hate ye!’ Again, in Holland you gain an accession to your ideas of civilisation by recognising large tracts of mud and water as the dwellings of men, and are happy to find that a Dutchman is not a boor. You draw no parallel between yourself and him; and clap him on the back, and praise the neatness of his houses and windows without envying the owner. Our intercourse is as friendly, and as free from rivalry, as the notice we take of a great shock-dog. Our petty national prejudices do not bristle up at every turn ‘like quills upon the fretful porcupine.’ So far it is well. In other places I forget myself, but in France I am always an Englishman. The *black ox* there treads upon my forehead. In a town in Italy, some prisoners from behind the bars of a gaol-window, called out ‘*Francesce*’ as we passed, meaning thereby that *they* were gentlemen and that we were French. I was not displeased to have got so far south as to have worn out the traces of my personal identity in this manner. Anything to leave the sense of self behind us, and not to aggravate it by foreign travel and national antipathies! It is well to be a citizen of the world, to fall in, as nearly as we can, with the ways and feelings of others, and make one’s self at home wherever one comes: or it is better still to live in an *ideal* world, superior to the ordinary one, to carry in one’s own breast ‘that peace which passeth understanding,’ that no accident of time or place, irritation or disappointment, can assail, except for the moment, that neither debts nor duns annoy, that reconciles itself to all situations and smooths all difficulties; not to be calm in solitude and agitated in the assemblies of men, but in the midst of a great city to retain possession of one’s faculties as in a perfect solitude, and in a wilderness to be surrounded with the gorgeousness of art; to owe no allegiance to the elements, not to be the creature of circumstances, dependent on a gust of wind, a bad smell, a dinner, or a waiter at an inn, the good or bad state of the roads, but to make the best of our goings and comings, and of all circumstances, as only passages of that longer yet brief journey, that by fitful stages and various *ups* and *downs* conducts us to ‘our native dust and final home’!

# ON CANT AND HYPOCRISY

## ESSAY XXXIII

### ON CANT AND HYPOCRISY

#### A FRAGMENT

‘If to do were as easy as to teach others what were good to be done, chapels had been churches, and poor men’s cottages princes’ palaces.’

MR. ADDISON, it is said, was fond of tippling; and Curl, it is added, when he called on him in the morning, used to ask as a particular favour for a glass of Canary, by way of ingratiating himself, and that the other might have a pretence to join him and finish the bottle. He fell a martyr to this habit, and yet (some persons more nice than wise exclaim,) he desired that the young Earl of Warwick might attend him on his death-bed, ‘to see how a Christian could die!’ I see no inconsistency nor hypocrisy in this. A man may be a good Christian, a sound believer, and a sincere lover of virtue, and have, notwithstanding, one or more failings. If he had recommended it to others to get drunk, then I should have said he was a hypocrite, and that his pretended veneration for the Christian religion was a mere cloak put on to suit the purposes of fashion or convenience. His doing what it condemned was no proof of any such thing: ‘The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak.’ He is a hypocrite who professes what he does not believe; not he who does not practise all he wishes or approves. It might on the same ground be argued, that a man is a hypocrite who admires Raphael or Shakespear, because he cannot paint like the one, or write like the other. If any one really despised what he affected outwardly to admire, this would be hypocrisy. If he affected to admire it a great deal more than he really did, this would be cant. Sincerity has to do with the connexion between our words and thoughts, and not between our belief and actions. The last constantly belie the strongest convictions and resolutions in the best of men; it is only the base and dishonest who give themselves credit with their tongues, for sentiments and opinions which in their hearts they disown.

I do not therefore think that the old theological maxim—‘The greater the sinner, the greater the saint’—is so utterly unfounded. There is some mixture of truth in it. For as long as man is composed of two parts, body and soul, and while these are allowed to pull different ways, I see no reason why, in proportion to the length the one goes, the opposition or reaction of the other should not be more violent. It is certain, for example, that no one makes

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such good resolutions as the sot and the gambler in their moments of repentance, or can be more impressed with the horrors of their situation;—should this disposition, instead of a transient, idle pang, by chance become lasting, who can be supposed to feel the beauty of temperance and economy more, or to look back with greater gratitude to their escape from the trammels of vice and passion? Would the ingenious and elegant author of the *SPECTATOR* feel less regard for the Scriptures, because they denounced in pointed terms the infirmity that ‘most easily beset him,’ that was the torment of his life, and the cause of his death? Such reasoning would be true, if man was a simple animal or a logical machine, and all his faculties and impulses were in strict unison; instead of which they are eternally at variance, and no one hates or takes part against himself more heartily or heroically than does the same individual. Does he not pass sentence on his own conduct? Is not his conscience both judge and accuser? What else is the meaning of all our resolutions against ourselves, as well as of our exhortations to others? *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*, is not the language of hypocrisy, but of human nature.

The hypocrisy of priests has been a butt for ridicule in all ages; but I am not sure that there has not been more wit than philosophy in it. A priest, it is true, is obliged to affect a greater degree of sanctity than ordinary men, and probably more than he possesses; and this is so far, I am willing to allow, hypocrisy and solemn grimace. But I cannot admit, that though he may exaggerate, or even make an ostentatious display of religion and virtue through habit and spiritual pride, that this is a proof he has not these sentiments in his heart, or that his whole behaviour is the mere acting of a part. His character, his motives, are not altogether pure and sincere: are they therefore all false and hollow? No such thing. It is contrary to all our observation and experience so to interpret it. We all wear some disguise—make some professions—use some artifice to set ourselves off as being better than we are; and yet it is not denied that we have some good intentions and praiseworthy qualities at bottom, though we may endeavour to keep some others that we think less to our credit as much as possible in the background:—why then should we not extend the same favourable construction to monks and friars, who may be sometimes caught tripping as well as other men—with less excuse, no doubt; but if it is also with greater remorse of conscience, which probably often happens, their pretensions are not all downright, bare-faced imposture. Their sincerity, compared with that of other men, can only be judged of by the proportion between the degree of virtue they profess, and that which they practise, or at least carefully

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seek to realise. To conceive it otherwise, is to insist that characters must be all perfect, or all vicious—neither of which suppositions is even possible. If a clergyman is notoriously a drunkard, a debauchee, a glutton, or a scoffer, then for him to lay claim at the same time to extraordinary inspirations of faith or grace, is both scandalous and ridiculous. The scene between the Abbot and the poor brother in the ‘Duenna’ is an admirable exposure of this double-faced dealing. But because a parson has a relish for the good things of this life, or what is commonly called *a liquorish tooth in his head*, (beyond what he would have it supposed by others, or even by himself,) that he has therefore no fear or belief of the next, I hold for a crude and vulgar prejudice. If a poor half-starved parish priest pays his court to an *olla podrida*, or a venison pasty, with uncommon *gusto*, shall we say that he has no other sentiments in offering his devotions to a crucifix, or in counting his beads? I see no more ground for such an inference, than for affirming that Handel was not in earnest when he sat down to compose a Symphony, because he had at the same time perhaps a bottle of cordials in his cupboard; or that Raphael was not entitled to the epithet of *divine*, because he was attached to the Fornarina! Everything has its turn in this chequered scene of things, unless we prevent it from taking its turn by over-rigid conditions, or drive men to despair or the most callous effrontery, by erecting a standard of perfection, to which no one can conform in reality! Thomson, in his ‘Castle of Indolence,’ (a subject on which his pen ran riot,) has indulged in rather a free description of ‘a little round fat, oily man, of God—

‘ Who shone all glittering with ungodly dew,  
If a tight damsel chanced to trippen by;  
Which, when observed, he shrunk into his mew,  
And straight would recollect his piety anew.’

Now, was the piety in this case the less real, because it had been forgotten for a moment? Or even if this motive should not prove the strongest in the end, would this therefore show that it was none, which is necessary to the argument here combated, or to make out our little plump priest a very knave! A priest may be honest, and yet err; as a woman may be modest, and yet half-inclined to be a rake. So the virtue of prudes may be suspected, though not their sincerity. The strength of their passions may make them more conscious of their weakness, and more cautious of exposing themselves; but not more to blind others than as a guard upon themselves. Again, suppose a clergyman hazards a jest upon sacred subjects, does it follow that he does not believe a word of the matter? Put the case that any one else, encouraged

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by his example, takes up the banter or levity, and see what effect it will have upon the reverend divine. He will turn round like a serpent trod upon, with all the vehemence and asperity of the most bigoted orthodoxy. Is this dictatorial and exclusive spirit then put on merely as a mask and to browbeat others? No; but he thinks he is privileged to trifle with the subject safely himself, from the store of evidence he has in reserve, and from the nature of his functions; but he is afraid of serious consequences being drawn from what others might say, or from his seeming to countenance it; and the moment the Church is in danger, or his own faith brought in question, his attachment to each becomes as visible as his hatred to those who dare to impugn either the one or the other. A woman's attachment to her husband is not to be suspected, if she will allow no one to abuse him but herself! It has been remarked, that with the spread of liberal opinions, or a more general scepticism on articles of faith, the clergy and religious persons in general have become more squeamish and jealous of any objections to their favourite doctrines: but this is what must follow in the natural course of things—the resistance being always in proportion to the danger; and arguments and books that were formerly allowed to pass unheeded, because it was supposed impossible they could do any mischief, are now denounced or prohibited with the most zealous vigilance, from a knowledge of the contagious nature of their influence and contents. So in morals, it is obvious that the greatest nicety of expression and allusion must be observed, where the manners are the most corrupt, and the imagination most easily excited, not out of mere affectation, but as a dictate of common sense and decency.

One of the finest remarks that has been made in modern times, is that of Lord Shaftesbury, that there is no such thing as a perfect Theist, or an absolute Atheist; that whatever may be the general conviction entertained on the subject, the evidence is not and cannot be at all times equally present to the mind; that even if it were, we are not in the same humour to receive it: a fit of the gout, a shower of rain shakes our best-established conclusions; and according to circumstances and the frame of mind we are in, our belief varies from the most sanguine enthusiasm to lukewarm indifference, or the most gloomy despair. There is a point of conceivable faith which might prevent any lapse from virtue, and reconcile all contrarieties between theory and practice; but this is not to be looked for in the ordinary course of nature, and is reserved for the abodes of the blest. Here, 'upon this bank and shoal of time,' the utmost we can hope to attain is a strong habitual belief in the excellence of virtue, or the dispensations of Providence; and the conflict of the passions, and their

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occasional mastery over us, far from disproving or destroying this general, rational conviction, often fling us back more forcibly upon it, and like other infidelities and misunderstandings, produce all the alternate remorse and raptures of repentance and reconciliation.

It has been frequently remarked that the most obstinate heretic or confirmed sceptic, witnessing the service of the Roman Catholic church, the elevation of the host amidst the sounds of music, the pomp of ceremonies, the embellishments of art, feels himself spell-bound; and is almost persuaded to become a renegade to his reason or his religion. Even in hearing a vespers chaunted on the stage, or in reading an account of a torch-light procession in a romance, a superstitious awe creeps over the frame, and we are momentarily charmed out of ourselves. When such is the obvious and involuntary influence of circumstances on the imagination, shall we say that a monkish recluse surrounded from his childhood by all this pomp, a stranger to any other faith, who has breathed no other atmosphere, and all whose meditations are bent on this one subject both by interest and habit and duty, is to be set down as a rank and heartless mountebank in the professions he makes of belief in it, because his thoughts may sometimes wander to forbidden subjects, or his feet stumble on forbidden ground? Or shall not the deep shadows of the woods in Vallombrosa enhance the solemnity of this feeling, or the icy horrors of the Grand Chartreux add to its elevation and its purity? To argue otherwise is to misdeem of human nature, and to limit its capacities for good or evil by some narrow-minded standard of our own. Man is neither a God nor a brute; but there is a prosaic and a poetical side to everything concerning him, and it is as impossible absolutely and for a constancy to exclude either one or the other from the mind, as to make him live without air or food. The *ideal*, the empire of thought and aspiration after truth and good, is inseparable from the nature of an intellectual being—what right have we then to catch at every strife which in the mortified professors of religion the spirit wages with the flesh as grossly vicious, or at every doubt, the bare suggestion of which fills them with consternation and despair, as a proof of the most glaring hypocrisy? The grossnesses of religion and its stickling for mere forms as its essence, have given a handle, and a just one, to its impugnors. At the feast of Ramadan (says Voltaire) the Mussulmans wash and pray five times a day, and then fall to cutting one another's throats again with the greatest deliberation and good-will. The two things, I grant, are sufficiently at variance; but they are, I contend, equally sincere in both. The Mahometans are savages, but they are not the less true believers—they hate their enemies as heartily as they revere the Koran. This,

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instead of showing the fallacy of the *ideal* principle, shows its universality and indestructible essence. Let a man be as bad as he will, as little refined as possible, and indulge whatever hurtful passions or gross vices he thinks proper, these cannot occupy the whole of his time; and in the intervals between one scoundrel action and another he may and must have better thoughts, and may have recourse to those of religion (true or false) among the number, without in this being guilty of hypocrisy or of making a jest of what is considered as sacred. This, I take it, is the whole secret of Methodism, which is a sort of modern vent for the ebullitions of the spirit through the gaps of unrighteousness.

We often see that a person condemns in another the very thing he is guilty of himself. Is this hypocrisy? It may, or it may not. If he really feels none of the disgust and abhorrence he expresses, this is quackery and impudence. But if he really expresses what he feels, (and he easily may, for it is the abstract idea he contemplates in the case of another, and the immediate temptation to which he yields in his own, so that he probably is not even conscious of the identity or connexion between the two,) then this is not hypocrisy, but want of strength and keeping in the moral sense. All morality consists in squaring our actions and sentiments to our ideas of what is fit and proper; and it is the incessant struggle and alternate triumph of the two principles, the *ideal* and the physical, that keeps up this 'mighty coil and pudder' about vice and virtue, and is one great source of all the good and evil in the world. The mind of man is like a clock that is always running down, and requires to be as constantly wound up. The *ideal* principle is the master-key that winds it up, and without which it would come to a stand: the sensual and selfish feelings are the dead weights that pull it down to the gross and grovelling. Till the intellectual faculty is destroyed, (so that the mind sees nothing beyond itself, or the present moment,) it is impossible to have all brutal depravity: till the material and physical are done away with, (so that it shall contemplate everything from a purely spiritual and disinterested point of view,) it is impossible to have all virtue. There must be a mixture of the two, as long as man is compounded of opposite materials, a contradiction and an eternal competition for the mastery. I by no means think a single bad action condemns a man, for he probably condemns it as much as you do; nor a single bad habit, for he is probably trying all his life to get rid of it. A man is only thoroughly profligate when he has lost the sense of right and wrong; or a thorough hypocrite, when he has not even the wish to be what he appears. The greatest offence against virtue is to speak ill of it. To recommend certain things is worse than to practise

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them. There may be an excuse for the last in the frailty of passion ; but the former can arise from nothing but an utter depravity of disposition. Any one may yield to temptation, and yet feel a sincere love and aspiration after virtue : but he who maintains vice in theory, has not even the conception or capacity for virtue in his mind. Men err : fiends only make a mock at goodness.

We sometimes deceive ourselves, and think worse of human nature than it deserves, in consequence of judging of character from names, and classes, and modes of life. No one is simply and absolutely any one thing, though he may be branded with it as a name. Some persons have expected to see his crimes written in the face of a murderer, and have been disappointed because they did not, as if this impeached the distinction between virtue and vice. Not at all. The circumstance only showed that the man was other things, and had other feelings besides those of a murderer. If he had nothing else,—if he had fed on nothing else,—if he had dreamt of nothing else, but schemes of murder, his features would have expressed nothing else : but this perfection in vice is not to be expected from the contradictory and mixed nature of our motives. Humanity is to be met with in a den of robbers ; nay, modesty in a brothel. Even among the most abandoned of the other sex, there is not unfrequently found to exist (contrary to all that is generally supposed) one strong and individual attachment, which remains unshaken to the last. Virtue may be said to steal, like a guilty thing, into the secret haunts of vice and infamy ; it clings to their devoted victim, and will not be driven quite away. Nothing can destroy the human heart. Again, there is a heroism in crime, as well as in virtue. Vice and infamy have also their altars and their religion. This makes nothing in their favour, but is a proof of the heroical disinterestedness of man's nature, and that whatever he does, he must fling a dash of romance and sublimity into it ; just as some grave biographer has said of Shakespear, that 'even when he killed a calf, he made a speech and did it in a great style.'

It is then impossible to get rid of this original distinction and contradictory bias, and to reduce everything to the system of French levity and Epicurean indifference. Wherever there is a capacity of conceiving of things as different from what they are, there must be a principle of taste and selection—a disposition to make them better, and a power to make them worse. Ask a Parisian milliner if she does not think one bonnet more becoming than another—a Parisian dancing-master if French grace is not better than English awkwardness—a French cook if all sauces are alike—a French *blacklegs* if all throws are equal on the dice ? It is curious that the French nation restrict rigid rules and fixed principles to cookery and the drama, and



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maintain that the great drama of human life is entirely a matter of caprice and fancy. No one will assert that Raphael's histories, that Claude's landscapes are not better than a daub : but if the expression in one of Raphael's faces is better than the most mean and vulgar, how resist the consequence that the feeling so expressed is better also ? It does not appear to me that all faces or all actions are alike. If goodness were only a theory, it were a pity it should be lost to the world. There are a number of things, the idea of which is a clear gain to the mind. Let people, for instance, rail at friendship, genius, freedom, as long as they will—the very names of these despised qualities are better than anything else that could be substituted for them, and embalm even the most envenomed satire against them. It is no small consideration that the mind is capable even of feigning such things. So I would contend against that reasoning which would have it thought that if religion is not true, there is no difference between mankind and the beasts that perish ;—I should say, that this distinction is equally proved, if religion is supposed to be a mere fabrication of the human mind ; the capacity to conceive it makes the difference. The idea alone of an over-ruling Providence, or of a future state, is as much a distinctive mark of a superiority of nature, as the invention of the mathematics, which are true,—or of poetry, which is a fable. Whatever the truth or falsehood of our speculations, the power to make them is peculiar to ourselves.

The contrariety and warfare of different faculties and dispositions within us has not only given birth to the Manichean and Gnostic heresies, and to other superstitions of the East, but will account for many of the mummeries and dogmas both of Popery and Calvinism,—confession, absolution, justification by faith, &c. ; which, in the hopelessness of attaining perfection, and our dissatisfaction with ourselves for falling short of it, are all substitutes for actual virtue, and an attempt to throw the burthen of a task, to which we are unequal or only half disposed, on the merits of others, or on outward forms, ceremonies, and professions of faith. Hence the crowd of

' Eremites and friars,  
White, black, and grey, with all their trumpery.'

If we do not conform to the law, we at least acknowledge the jurisdiction of the court. A person does wrong ; he is sorry for it ; and as he still feels himself liable to error, he is desirous to make atonement as well as he can, by ablutions, by tithes, by penance, by sacrifices, or other voluntary demonstrations of obedience, which are in his power, though his passions are not, and which prove that his will is not refractory, and that his understanding is right towards God.

## ON CANT AND HYPOCRISY

The stricter tenets of Calvinism, which allow of no medium between grace and reprobation, and doom man to eternal punishment for every breach of the moral law, as an equal offence against infinite truth and justice, proceed (like the paradoxical doctrine of the Stoics) from taking a half-view of this subject, and considering man as amenable only to the dictates of his understanding and his conscience, and not excusable from the temptations and frailty of human ignorance and passion. The mixing up of religion and morality together, or the making us accountable for every word, thought, or action, under no less a responsibility than our everlasting future welfare or misery, has also added incalculably to the difficulties of self-knowledge, has superinduced a violent and spurious state of feeling, and made it almost impossible to distinguish the boundaries between the true and false, in judging of human conduct and motives. A religious man is afraid of looking into the state of his soul, lest at the same time he should reveal it to Heaven; and tries to persuade himself that by shutting his eyes to his true character and feelings, they will remain a profound secret both here and hereafter. This is a strong engine and irresistible inducement to self-deception; and the more zealous any one is in his convictions of the truth of religion, the more we may suspect the sincerity of his pretensions to piety and morality.

Thus, though I think there is very little downright hypocrisy in the world, I do think there is a great deal of *cant*—‘cant religious, cant political, cant literary,’ &c. as Lord Byron said. Though few people have the face to set up for the very thing they in their hearts despise, we almost all want to be thought better than we are, and affect a greater admiration or abhorrence of certain things than we really feel. Indeed, some degree of affectation is as necessary to the mind as dress is to the body; we must overact our part in some measure, in order to produce any effect at all. There were formerly the two hours’ sermon, the long-winded grace, the nasal drawl, the uplifted hands and eyes; all which, though accompanied with some corresponding emotion, expressed more than was really felt, and were in fact intended to make up for the conscious deficiency. As our interest in anything wears out with time and habit, we exaggerate the outward symptoms of zeal as mechanical helps to devotion, dwell the longer on our words as they are less felt, and hence the very origin of the term, *cant*. The cant of sentimentality has succeeded to that of religion. There is a cant of humanity, of patriotism and loyalty—not that people do not feel these emotions, but they make too great a *fuss* about them, and drawl out the expression of them till they tire themselves and others. There is a cant about Shakespear. There is a cant about *Political Economy* just now. In short, there is and

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must be a cant about everything that excites a considerable degree of attention and interest, and that people would be thought to know and care rather more about than they actually do. Cant is the voluntary overcharging or prolongation of a real sentiment; hypocrisy is the setting up a pretension to a feeling you never had and have no wish for. Mr. Coleridge is made up of *cant*, that is, of mawkish affectation and sensibility; but he has not sincerity enough to be a *hypocrite*, that is, he has not hearty dislike or contempt enough for anything, to give the lie to his puling professions of admiration and esteem for it. The fuss that Mr. Liberal Snake makes about Political Economy is not cant, but what Mr. Theodore Hook politely calls *humbug*; he himself is hardly the dupe of his own pompous reasoning, but he wishes to make it the *stalking-horse* of his ambition or interest to sneak into a place and curry favour with the Government. . . . *Cætera desunt*.

### ESSAY XXXIV

#### ON FOOTMEN

FOOTMEN are no part of Christianity; but they are a very necessary appendage to our happy Constitution in Church and State. What would the bishop's mitre be without these grave supporters to his dignity? Even the plain presbyter does not dispense with his decent serving-man to stand behind his chair and load his duly emptied plate with beef and pudding, at which the genius of Ude turns pale. What would become of the coronet-coach filled with elegant and languid forms, if it were not for the triple row of powdered, laced, and liveried footmen, clustering, fluttering, and lounging behind it? What an idea do we not conceive of the fashionable *belle* who is making the most of her time and tumbling over silks and satins within at Sewell and Cross's, or at the Bazaar in Soho-square, from the tall lacquey in blue and silver with gold-headed cane, cocked-hat, white thread stockings and large calves to his legs, who stands as her representative without! The sleek shopman appears at the door, at an understood signal the livery-servant starts from his position, the coach-door flies open, the steps are let down, the young lady enters the carriage as young ladies are taught to step into carriages, the footman closes the door, mounts behind, and the glossy vehicle rolls off, bearing its lovely burden and her gaudy attendant from the gaze of the gaping crowd! Is there not a spell in beauty, a charm in rank and fashion, that one would almost wish to be this fellow—to obey its nod, to

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watch its looks, to breathe but by its permission, and to live but for its use, its scorn, or pride?

Footmen are in general looked upon as a sort of supernumeraries in society—they have no place assigned them in any Scotch Encyclopædia—they do not come under any of the heads in Mr. Mill's Elements, or Mr. Macculloch's Principles of Political Economy; and they nowhere have had impartial justice done them, except in Lady Booby's love for one of that order. But if not 'the Corinthian capitals of polished society,' they are 'a graceful ornament to the civil order.' Lords and ladies could not do without them. Nothing exists in this world but by contrast. A foil is necessary to make the plainest truths self-evident. It is the very insignificance, the non-entity as it were of the gentlemen of the cloth, that constitutes their importance, and makes them an indispensable feature in the social system, by setting off the pretensions of their superiors to the best advantage. What would be the good of having a will of our own, if we had not others about us who are deprived of all will of their own, and who wear a badge to say 'I serve'? How can we show that we are the lords of the creation but by reducing others to the condition of machines, who never move but at the beck of our caprices? Is not the plain suit of the master wonderfully relieved by the borrowed trappings and mock-finery of his servant? You see that man on horseback who keeps at some distance behind another, who follows him as his shadow, turns as he turns, and as he passes or speaks to him, lifts his hand to his hat and observes the most profound attention—what is the difference between these two men? The one is as well mounted, as well fed, is younger and seemingly in better health than the other; but between these two there are perhaps seven or eight classes of society, each of whom is dependent on and trembles at the frown of the other—it is a nobleman and his lacquey. Let any one take a stroll towards the West-end of the town, South Audley or Upper Grosvenor-street; it is then he will feel himself first entering into the *beau-idéal* of civilised life, a society composed entirely of lords and footmen! Deliver me from the filth and cellars of St. Giles's, from the shops of Holborn and the Strand, from all that appertains to middle and to low life; and commend me to the streets with the straw at the doors and hatchments overhead to tell us of those who are just born or who are just dead, and with groups of footmen lounging on the steps and insulting the passengers—it is then I feel the true dignity and imaginary pretensions of human nature realised! There is here none of the squalidness of poverty, none of the hardships of daily labour, none of the anxiety and petty artifice of trade; life's business is changed into a romance, a summer's-dream, and nothing painful, disgusting, or vulgar intrudes.

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All is on a liberal and handsome scale. The true ends and benefits of society are here enjoyed and bountifully lavished, and all the trouble and misery banished, and not even allowed so much as to exist in thought. Those who would find the real Utopia, should look for it somewhere about Park-lane or May Fair. It is there only any feasible approach to equality is made—for it is *like master like man*. Here, as I look down Curzon-street, or catch a glimpse of the taper spire of South Audley Chapel, or the family-arms on the gate of Chesterfield-House, the vista of years opens to me, and I recall the period of the triumph of Mr. Burke's 'Reflections on the French Revolution,' and the overthrow of 'The Rights of Man!' You do not indeed penetrate to the interior of the mansion where sits the stately possessor, luxurious and refined; but you draw your inference from the lazy, pampered, motley crew poured forth from his portals. This mealy-coated, moth-like, butterfly-generation, seem to have no earthly business but to enjoy themselves. Their green liveries accord with the budding leaves and spreading branches of the trees in Hyde Park—they seem 'like brothers of the groves'—their red faces and powdered heads harmonise with the blossoms of the neighbouring almond-trees, that shoot their sprays over old-fashioned brick-walls. They come forth like grasshoppers in June, as numerous and as noisy. They bask in the sun and laugh in your face. Not only does the master enjoy an uninterrupted leisure and tranquillity—those in his employment have nothing to do. He wants drones, not drudges, about him, to share his superfluity, and give a haughty pledge of his exemption from care. They grow sleek and wanton, saucy and supple. From being independent of the world, they acquire the look of *gentlemen's gentlemen*. There is a cast of the aristocracy, with a slight shade of distinction. The saying, 'Tell me your company, and I'll tell you your manners,' may be applied *cum grano salis* to the servants in great families. Mr. N—— knew an old butler who had lived with a nobleman so long, and had learned to imitate his walk, look, and way of speaking, so exactly that it was next to impossible to tell them apart. See the porter in the great leather-chair in the hall—how big, and burly, and self-important he looks; while my Lord's gentleman (the politician of the family) is reading the second edition of 'The Courier' (once more in request) at the side window, and the footman is romping, or taking tea with the maids in the kitchen below. A match-girl meanwhile plies her shrill trade at the railing; or a gipsy-woman passes with her rustic wares through the street, avoiding the closer haunts of the city. What a pleasant farce is that of 'High Life Below Stairs'! What a careless life do the domestics of the Great lead! For, not to speak of the reflected

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self-importance of their masters and mistresses, and the contempt with which they look down on the herd of mankind, they have only to eat and drink their fill, talk the scandal of the neighbourhood, laugh at the follies, or assist the intrigues of their betters, till they themselves fall in love, marry, set up a public house, (the only thing they are fit for,) and without habits of industry, resources in themselves, or self-respect, and drawing fruitless comparisons with the past, are, of all people, the most miserable ! Service is no inheritance ; and when it fails, there is not a more helpless, or more worthless set of devils in the world. Mr. C—— used to say he should like to be a footman to some elderly lady of quality, to carry her prayer-book to church, and place her hassock right for her. There can be no doubt that this would have been better, and quite as useful as the life he has led, dancing attendance on Prejudice, but flirting with Paradox in such a way as to cut himself out of the old lady's will. For my part, if I had to choose, I should prefer the service of a young mistress, and might share the fate of the footman recorded in heroic verse by Lady Wortley Montagu. Certainly it can be no hard duty, though a sort of *forlorn hope*, to have to follow three sisters, or youthful friends, (resembling the three Graces,) at a slow pace, and with grave demeanour, from Cumberland Gate to Kensington Gardens—to be there shut out, a privation enhancing the privilege, and making the sense of distant, respectful, idolatrous admiration more intense—and then, after a brief interval lost in idle chat, or idler reverie, to have to follow them back again, observing, not observed, to keep within call, to watch every gesture, to see the breeze play with the light tresses or lift the morning robe aside, to catch the half-suppressed laugh, and hear the low murmur of indistinct words and wishes, like the music of the spheres. An *amateur footman* would seem a more rational occupation than that of an amateur author, or an amateur artist. An insurmountable barrier, if it excludes passion, does not banish sentiment, but draws an atmosphere of superstitious, trembling apprehension round the object of so much attention and respect ; nothing makes women seem so much like angels as always to see, never to converse with them ; and those whom we have to dangle a cane after must, to a lacquey of any spirit, appear worthy to wield sceptres.

But of all situations of this kind, the most enviable is that of a lady's maid in a family travelling abroad. In the obtuseness of foreigners to the nice gradations of English refinement and manners, the maid has not seldom a chance of being taken for the mistress—a circumstance never to be forgot ! See our Abigail mounted in the *dicky* with my Lord, or John, snug and comfortable—setting out on the grand tour as fast as four horses can carry her, whirled over the

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'vine-covered hills and gay regions of France,' crossing the Alps and Apennines in breathless terror and wonder—frightened at a precipice, laughing at her escape—coming to the inn, going into the kitchen to see what is to be had—not speaking a word of the language, except what she picks up, 'as pigeons pick up peas':—the bill paid, the passport *visé*, the horses put to, and *au route* again—seeing every thing, and understanding nothing, in a full tide of health, fresh air, and animal spirits, and without one qualm of taste or sentiment, and arriving at Florence, the city of palaces, with its amphitheatre of hills and olives, without suspecting that such a person as Boccaccio, Dante, or Galileo, had ever lived there, while her young mistress is puzzled with the varieties of the Tuscan dialect, is disappointed in the Arno, and cannot tell what to make of the statue of David by Michael Angelo, in the Great Square. The difference is, that the young lady, on her return, has something to think of; but the maid absolutely forgets every thing, and is only giddy and out of breath, as if she had been up in a balloon.

'No more : where ignorance is bliss,  
'Tis folly to be wise !'

English servants abroad, notwithstanding the comforts they enjoy, and although travelling as it were *en famille*, must be struck with the ease and familiar footing on which foreigners live with their domestics, compared with the distance and reserve with which they are treated. The housemaid (*la bonne*) sits down in the room, or walks abreast with you in the street; and the valet who waits behind his master's chair at table, gives Monsieur his advice or opinion without being asked for it. We need not wonder at this familiarity and freedom, when we consider that those who allowed it could (formerly at least, when the custom began) send those who transgressed but in the smallest degree to the Bastille or the galleys at their pleasure. The licence was attended with perfect impunity. With us the law leaves less to discretion; and by interposing a real independence (and plea of right) between the servant and master, does away with the appearance of it on the surface of manners. The insolence and tyranny of the Aristocracy fell more on the trades-people and mechanics than on their domestics, who were attached to them by a semblance of feudal ties. Thus an upstart lady of quality (an imitator of the old school) would not deign to speak to a milliner while fitting on her dress, but gave her orders to her waiting-women to tell her what to do. Can we wonder at twenty *reigns of terror* to efface such a feeling?

I have alluded to the inclination in servants in great houses to ape

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the manners of their superiors, and to their sometimes succeeding. What facilitates the metamorphosis is, that the Great, in their character of *courtiers*, are a sort of footmen in their turn. There is the same crouching to interest and authority in either case, with the same surrender or absence of personal dignity—the same submission to the trammels of outward form, with the same suppression of inward impulses—the same degrading finery, the same pretended deference in the eye of the world, and the same lurking contempt from being admitted behind the scenes, the same heartlessness, and the same eye-service—in a word, they are alike puppets governed by motives not their own, machines made of coarser or finer materials. It is not, therefore, surprising, if the most finished courtier of the day cannot, by a vulgar eye, be distinguished from a gentleman's servant. M. de Bausset, in his amusing and excellent *Memoirs*, makes it an argument of the legitimacy of Napoleon's authority, that from denying it, it would follow that his lords of the bed-chamber were valets, and he himself (as prefect of the palace) no better than head-cook. The inference is logical enough. According to the author's view, there was no other difference between the retainers of the court and the kitchen than the rank of the master!

I remember hearing it said that 'all men were equal but footmen.' But of all footmen the lowest class is *literary footmen*. These consist of persons who, without a single grain of knowledge, taste, or feeling, put on the livery of learning, mimic its phrases by rote, and are retained in its service by dint of quackery and assurance alone. As they have none of the essence, they have all the externals of men of gravity and wisdom. They wear green spectacles, walk with a peculiar strut, thrust themselves into the acquaintance of persons they hear talked of, get introduced into the clubs, are seen reading books they do not understand at the Museum and public libraries, dine (if they can) with lords or officers of the Guards, abuse any party as *low* to show what fine gentlemen they are, and the next week join the same party to raise their own credit and gain a little consequence, give themselves out as wits, critics, and philosophers (and as they have never done any thing, no man can contradict them), and have a great knack of turning editors, and not paying their contributors. If you get five pounds from one of them, he never forgives it. With the proceeds thus appropriated, the book-worm graduates a dandy, hires expensive apartments, sports a tandem, and it is inferred that he must be a great author who can support such an appearance with his pen, and a great genius who can conduct so many learned works while his time is devoted to the gay, the fair, and the rich. This introduces him to new editorships, to new and more select friendships, and



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to more frequent and importunate demands from debts and duns. At length the bubble bursts and disappears, and you hear no more of our classical adventurer, except from the invectives and self-reproaches of those who took him for a great scholar from his wearing green spectacles and Wellington-boots. Such a candidate for literary honours bears the same relation to the man of letters, that the valet with his second-hand finery and servile airs does to his master.

### ESSAY XXXV

#### ON EDITORS

‘Our withers are unwrung.’

EDITORS are (to use an approved Scotch phrase—for what that is Scotch is not approved?) a ‘sort of *kittle-kattle*’—difficult to deal with, dangerous to discuss. ‘A capital subject for an article, great scope, complete novelty, and ground never touched upon!’ Very true; for what Editor would insert an article against himself? Certainly none that did not feel himself free from and superior to the common foibles of his tribe. What might, therefore, be taken for a satire in manuscript, turns to a compliment in print—the exception in this, as in other cases, proves the rule—an inference we have endeavoured to express in our motto.

With one exception, then, Editors in general partake of the usual infirmity of human nature, and of persons placed in high and honorary situations. Like other individuals raised to authority, they are chosen to fill a certain post for qualities useful or ornamental to the *reading public*; but they soon fancy that the situation has been invented for their own honour and profit, and sink the use in the abuse. Kings are not the only servants of the public who imagine that they are the *state*. Editors are but men, and easily ‘lay the flattering unction to their souls’ that they *are* the Magazine, the Newspaper, or the Review they conduct. They have got a little power in their hands, and they wish to employ that power (as all power is employed) to increase the sense of self-importance; they borrow a certain dignity from their situation as arbiters and judges of taste and elegance, and they are determined to keep it to the detriment of their employers and of every one else. They are dreadfully afraid there should be any thing behind the Editor’s chair, greater than the Editor’s chair. That is a scandal to be prevented at all risks. The publication they are

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entrusted with for the amusement and edification of the town, they convert, in theory and practice, into a stalking horse of their own vanity, whims, and prejudices. They cannot write a whole work themselves, but they take care that the whole is such as they might have written: it is to have the Editor's mark, like the broad R, on every page, or the N. N. at the Tuilleries; it is to bear the same image and superscription—every line is to be upon oath: nothing is to be differently conceived or better expressed than the Editor could have done it. The whole begins in vanity, and ends too often in dulness and insipidity.

It is utterly impossible to persuade an Editor that he is nobody. As Mr. Horne Tooke said, on his trial for a libel before Lord Kenyon, 'There are two parties in this cause—myself and the jury; the judge and the crier of the court attend in their respective places:' so in every periodical miscellany, there are two essential parties—the writers and the public; the Editor and the printer's-devil are merely the mechanical instruments to bring them together. There is a secret consciousness of this on the part of the Conductor of the Literary Diligence, that his place is one for shew and form rather than use; and as he cannot maintain his pretended superiority by what he does himself, he thinks to arrive at the same end by hindering others from doing their best. The 'dog-in-the-manger' principle comes into full play. If an article has nothing to recommend it, is one of no mark or likelihood, it goes in; there is no offence in it. If it is likely to strike, to draw attention, to make a noise, then every syllable is scanned, every objection is weighed: if grave, it is too grave; if witty, it is too witty. One way or other, it might be better; and while this nice point is pending, it gives place, as a matter of course, to something that there is no question about.

The responsibility, the delicacy, the nervous apprehension of the Editor, naturally increase with the probable effect and popularity of the contributions on which he has to pass judgment; and the nearer an effusion approaches to perfection, the more fatal is a single flaw, or its falling short of that superhuman standard by a hair's-breadth difference, to its final reception. If people are likely to ask, 'Who wrote a certain paper in the last number of ——?' the Editor is bound, as a point of honour, to baulk that impertinent curiosity on the part of the public. He would have it understood that all the articles are equally good, and may be equally his own. If he inserts a paper of more than the allowed average merit, his next care is to spoil by revising it. The sting, with the honey, is sure to be left out. If there is any thing that pleased you in the writing, you look in vain for it in the proof. What might electrify the reader, startles the

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Editor. With a paternal regard for the interests of the public, he takes care that their tastes should not be pampered, and their expectations raised too high, by a succession of fine passages, of which it is impossible to continue a supply. He interposes between the town and their vicious appetite for the piquant and high-seasoned, as we forbid children to indulge in sweetmeats. The trite and superficial are always to be had *to order*, and present a beautiful uniformity of appearance. There is no unexpected relief, no unwelcome inequality of style, to disorder the nerves or perplex the understanding: the reader may read, and smile, and sleep, without meeting a single idea to break his repose!

Some Editors, moreover, have a way of altering the first paragraph: they have then exercised their privileges, and let you alone for the rest of the chapter. This is like paying 'a pepper-corn rent,' or making one's bow on entering a room: it is being let off cheap. Others add a pointless conclusion of their own: it is like signing their names to the article. Some have a passion for sticking in the word *however* at every opportunity, in order to impede the march of the style; and others are contented and take great pains (with Lindley Murray's Grammar lying open before them) to alter 'if it *is*' into 'if it *be*.' An Editor abhors an ellipsis. If you fling your thoughts into continued passages, they set to work to cut them up into short paragraphs: if you make frequent breaks, they turn the tables on you that way, and throw the whole composition into masses. Any thing to preserve the form and appearance of power, to make the work their own by mental stratagem, to stamp it by some fiction of criticism with their personal identity, to enable them to run away with the credit, and look upon themselves as the master-spirits of the work and of the age! If there is any point they do not understand, they are sure to meddle with it, and mar the sense; for it piques their self-love, and they think they are bound *ex-officio* to know better than the writer. Thus they substitute (at a venture, and merely for the sake of altering) one epithet for another, when perhaps the same word has occurred just before, and produces a cruel tautology, never considering the trouble you have taken to compare the context and vary the phraseology.

Editors have no misplaced confidence in the powers of their contributors: they think by the supposition they must be in the right from a single supercilious glance,—and you in the wrong, after poring over a subject for a month. There are Editors who, if you insert the name of a popular actor or artist, strike it out, and, in virtue of their authority, insert a favourite of their own,—as a dexterous attorney substitutes the name of a friend in a will. Some Editors will let you

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praise nobody; others will let you blame nobody. The first excites their jealousy of contemporary merit; the last excites their fears, and they do not like to make enemies. Some insist upon giving no opinion at all, and observe an *unarmed neutrality* as to all parties and persons;—it is no wonder the world think very little of them in return. Some Editors stand upon their characters for this; others for that. Some pique themselves upon being genteel and well-dressed; others on being moral and immaculate, and do not perceive that the public never trouble their heads about the matter. We only know one Editor who openly discards all regard to character and decency, and who thrives by the dissolution of partnership, if indeed the articles were ever drawn up. We shall not mention names, as we would not advertise a work that ‘ought to lie on no gentleman’s table.’ Some Editors drink tea with a set of *blue stockings* and literary ladies: not a whisper, not a breath that might blow away those fine cobwebs of the brain—

‘More subtle web Arachne cannot spin;  
Nor those fine threads which oft we woven see  
Of scorched dew, do not in the air more lightly flee!’

Others dine with Lords and Academicians—for God’s sake, take care what you say! Would you strip the Editor’s mantel-piece of the cards of invitation that adorn it to select parties for the next six months? An Editor takes a turn in St. James’s-street, and is congratulated by the successive literary or political groups on all he does *not* write; and when the mistake is found out, the true Simon Pure is dismissed. We have heard that it was well said by the proprietor of a leading journal, that he would take good care never to write a line in his own paper, as he had conflicting interests enough to manage, without adding literary jealousies to the number. On the other hand, a very good-natured and warm-hearted individual declared, ‘he would never have another man of talents for an Editor’ (the Editor, in this case, is to the proprietor as the author to the Editor), ‘for he was tired of having their good things thrust in his teeth.’ Some Editors are scrubs, mere drudges, newspaper-puffs: others are bullies or quacks: others are nothing at all—they have the name, and receive a salary for it! A literary sinecure is at once lucrative and highly respectable. At Lord’s-Ground there are some old hands that are famous for ‘*blocking out and staying in*’: it would seem that some of our literary veterans had taken a lesson from their youthful exercises at Harrow or Eton.

All this is bad enough; but the worst is, that Editors, besides their own failings, have *friends* who aggravate and take advantage of them.

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These self-styled friends are the night-shade and hemlock clinging to the work, preventing its growth and circulation, and dropping a slumberous poison from its jaundiced leaves. They form a *cordon*, an opaque mass round the Editor, and persuade him that they are the support, the prop, and pillar of his reputation. They get between him and the public, and shut out the light, and set aside common-sense. They pretend anxiety for the interest of some established organ of opinion, while all they want is to make it the organ of their dogmas, prejudices, or party. They want to be the Magazine or the Review—to wield that power covertly, to warp that influence to their own purposes. If they cannot do this, they care not if it sinks or swims. They prejudice every question—fly-blow every writer who is not of their own set. A friend of theirs has three articles in the last number of —; they strain every nerve and make pressing instances to throw a slur on a popular contribution by another hand, in order that he may write a fourth in the next number. The short articles which are read by the vulgar, are cut down to make room for the long ones, which are read by nobody but the writers and their friends. If an opinion is expressed contrary to the shibboleth of the party, it is represented as an outrage on decency and public opinion, when in truth the public are delighted with the candour and boldness displayed. They would convert the most valuable and spirited journal into a dull pamphleteer, stuffed with their own lucubrations on certain heavy topics. The self-importance of these people is in proportion to their insignificance; and what they cannot do by an appeal to argument or sound policy, they effect by importunity and insinuation. They keep the Editor in continual alarm as to what will be said of him by the public, when in fact the public will think (in nine cases out of ten) just what he tells them.

These people create much of the mischief. An Editor should have no friends—his only prompter should be the number of copies of the work that sell. It is superfluous to strike off a large impression of a work for those few squeamish persons who prefer lead to tinsel. Principle and good manners are barriers that are, in our estimate, inviolable: the rest is open to popular suffrage, and is not to be prejudged by a *coterie* with closed doors. Another difficulty lies here. An Editor should, in one sense, be a respectable man—a distinguished character; otherwise, he cannot lend his name and sanction to the work. The conductor of a periodical publication which is to circulate widely and give the tone to taste and opinion, ought to be of high standing, should have connections with society, should belong to some literary institution, should be courted by the great, be run after by the obscure. But ‘here’s the rub’—that one so graced and gifted can

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neither have his time nor his thoughts to himself. Our obligations are mutual; and those who owe much to others, become the slaves of their good opinion and good word. He who dines out loses his free agency. He may improve in politeness; he falls off in the pith and pungency of his style. A poem is dedicated to the son of the Muses:—can the critic do otherwise than praise it? A tragedy is brought out by a noble friend and patron:—the severe rules of the drama must yield in some measure to the amenities of private life. On the contrary, Mr. — is a garretteer—a person that nobody knows; his work has nothing but the *contents* to recommend it; it sinks into obscurity, or addresses itself to the *canaille*. An Editor, then, should be an abstraction—a being in the clouds—a mind without a body—reason without passion.—But where find such a one?

### ESSAY XXXVI

#### THE FREE ADMISSION

A FREE Admission is the *lotos* of the mind: the leaf in which your name is inscribed as having the privileges of the *entrée* for the season is of an oblivious quality—an antidote for half the ills of life. I speak here not of a purchased but of a gift-ticket, an emanation of the generosity of the Managers, a token of conscious desert. With the first you can hardly bring yourself to go to the theatre; with the last, you cannot keep away. If you have paid five guineas for a free-admission for the season, this *free-admission* turns to a mere slavery. You seem to have done a foolish thing, and to have committed an extravagance under the plea of economy. You are struck with remorse. You are impressed with a conviction that pleasure is not to be bought. You have paid for your privilege in the lump, and you receive the benefit in dribblets. The five pounds you are out of pocket does not meet with an adequate compensation the first night, or on any single occasion—you must come again, and use double diligence to strike a balance to make up your large arrears; instead of an obvious saving, it hangs as a dead-weight on your satisfaction all the year; and the improvident price you have paid for them kills every ephemeral enjoyment, and poisons the flattering illusions of the scene. You have incurred a debt, and must go every night to redeem it; and as you do not like being tied to the oar, or making a toil of a pleasure, you stay away altogether; give up the promised luxury as a bad speculation; sit sullenly at home, or bend your loitering feet in any

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other direction ; and putting up with the first loss, resolve never to be guilty of the like folly again. But it is not thus with the possessor of a Free Admission, truly so called. His is a pure pleasure, a clear gain. He feels none of these irksome qualms and misgivings. He marches to the theatre like a favoured lover ; if he is compelled to absent himself, he feels all the impatience and compunction of a prisoner. The portal of the Temple of the Muses stands wide open to him, closing the vista of the day—when he turns his back upon it at night with steps gradual and slow, mingled with the common crowd, but conscious of a virtue which they have not, he says, ‘ I shall come again to-morrow ! ’ In passing through the streets, he casts a side-long, careless glance at the playbills : he reads the papers chiefly with a view to see what is the play for the following day, or the ensuing week. If it is something new, he is glad ; if it is old, he is resigned—but he goes in either case. His steps bend mechanically that way—pleasure becomes a habit, and habit a duty—he fulfils his destiny—he walks deliberately along Long-acre (you may tell a man going to the play, and whether he pays or has a free admission)—quickens his pace as he turns the corner of Bow-street, and arrives breathless and in haste at the welcome spot, where on presenting himself, he receives a passport that is a release from care, thought, toil, for the evening, and wafts him into the regions of the blest ! What is it to him how the world turns round if the play goes on ; whether empires rise or fall, so that Covent-Garden stands its ground ? Shall he plunge into the void of politics, that volcano burnt-out with the cold, sterile, sightless lava, hardening all around ? or con over the registers of births, deaths, and marriages, when he may be present at Juliet’s wedding, and gaze on Juliet’s tomb ? or shall he wonder at the throng of coaches in Regent-street, when he can feast his eyes with the coach (the fairy-vision of his childhood) in which Cinderella rides to the ball ? Here (by the help of that *Open Sessame !* a Free Admission), ensconced in his favourite niche, looking from the ‘ loop-holes of retreat ’ in the second circle, he views the pageant of the world played before him ; melts down years to moments ; sees human life, like a gaudy shadow, glance across the stage ; and here tastes of all earth’s bliss, the sweet without the bitter, the honey without the sting, and plucks ambrosial fruits and amaranthine flowers (placed by the enchantress Fancy within his reach,) without having to pay a tax for it at the time, or repenting of it afterwards. ‘ He is all ear and eye, and drinks in sounds or sights that might create a soul under the ribs of death.’ ‘ The fly,’ says Gay, ‘ that sips treacle, is lost in the sweets ’ : so he that has a free-admission forgets every thing else. Why not ? It is the chief and enviable transfer of his being from the real to the

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unreal world, and the changing half his life into a dream. 'Oh ! leave me to my repose,' in my beloved corner at Covent Garden Theatre ! This (and not 'the arm-chair at an inn,' though that too, at other times, and under different circumstances, is not without its charms,) is to me 'the throne of felicity.' If I have business that would detain me from this, I put it off till the morrow ; if I have friends that call in just at the moment, let them go away under pain of bearing my maledictions with them. What is there in their conversation to atone to me for the loss of one quarter of an hour at the 'witching time of night' ? If it is on indifferent subjects, it is flat and insipid ; if it grows animated and interesting, it requires a painful effort, and begets a feverish excitement. But let me once reach, and fairly establish myself in this favourite seat, and I can bid a gay defiance to mischance, and leave debts and duns, friends and foes, objections and arguments, far behind me. I would, if I could, have it surrounded with a balustrade of gold, for it has been to me a palace of delight. There golden thoughts unbidden betide me, and golden visions come to me. There the dance, the laugh, the song, the scenic deception greet me ; there are wafted Shakespear's winged words, or Otway's plaintive lines ; and there how often have I heard young Kemble's voice, trembling at its own beauty, and prolonging its liquid tones, like the murmur of the billowy surge on sounding shores ! There I no longer torture a sentence or strain a paradox : the mind is full without an effort, pleased without asking why. It inhales an atmosphere of joy, and is steeped in all the luxury of woe. To show how much sympathy has to do with the effect, let us suppose any one to have a free admission to the rehearsals of a morning, what mortal would make use of it ? One might as well be at the bottom of a well, or at the top of St. Paul's for any pleasure we should derive from the finest tragedy or comedy. No, a play is nothing without an audience, it is a satisfaction too great and too general not to be shared with others. But reverse this cold and comfortless picture—let the eager crowd beset the theatre-doors 'like bees in spring-time, when the sun with Taurus rides'—let the boxes be filled with innocence and beauty like beds of lilies on the first night of Isabella or Belvidera, see the flutter, the uneasy delight of expectation, see the big tear roll down the cheek of sensibility as the story proceeds—let us listen to the deep thunder of the pit, or catch the gallery's shout at some true master-stroke of passion ; and we feel that a thousand hearts are beating in our bosoms, and hail the sparkling illusion reflected in a thousand eyes. The stage has, therefore, been justly styled 'a discipline of humanity' ; for there is no place where the social principle is called forth with such strength and harmony, by a



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powerful interest in a common object. A crowd is everywhere else oppressive; but the fuller the play-house, the more intimately and cordially do we sympathise with every individual in it. Empty benches have as bad an effect on the spectator as on the players. This is one reason why so many mistakes are made with respect to plays and players, ere they come before the public. The taste is crude and uninformed till it is ripened by the blaze of lighted lamps and the sunshine of happy faces: the cold, critical faculty, the judgment of Managers and Committees asks the glow of sympathy and the buzz of approbation to prompt and guide it. We judge in a crowd with the sense and feelings of others; and from the very strength of the impression, fancy we should have come to the same unavoidable conclusion had we been left entirely to ourselves. Let any one try the experiment by reading a manuscript play, or seeing it acted—or by hearing a candidate for the stage rehearse behind the scenes, or *top* his part after the orchestra have performed their fatal prelude. Nor is the air of a play-house favourable only to social feeling—it aids the indulgence of solitary musing. The brimming cup of joy or sorrow is full; but it runs over to other thoughts and subjects. We can there (nowhere better) ‘retire, the world shut out, our thoughts call home.’ We hear the revelry and the shout, but ‘the still, small voice’ of other years and cherished recollections is not wanting. It is pleasant to hear Miss Ford repeat *Love’s Catechism*, or Mrs. Humby<sup>1</sup> sing ‘I cannot marry Crout’: but the ear is not therefore deaf to Mrs. Jordan’s laugh in *Nell*; Mrs. Goodall’s *Rosalind* still haunts the glades of *Arden*, and the echo of *Amiens’* song, ‘Blow, blow, thou winter’s wind,’ lingers through a lapse of thirty years. A pantomime (the *Little Red Riding-Hood*) recalls the innocence of our childish thoughts: a dance (the *Minuet de la Cour*) throws us back to the gorgeous days of *Louis xiv.* and tells us that the age of chivalry is gone for ever. Who will be the Mrs. Siddons of a distant age? What future Kean shall ‘strut and fret his hour upon the stage,’ full of genius and free from errors? What favourite actor or actress will be taking their farewell benefit a hundred years hence? What plays and what players will then amuse the town? Oh, many-coloured scenes of human life! where are ye more truly represented than in the mirror of the stage? or where is that eternal principle of vicissitude which rules over ye, the painted pageant and the sudden gloom, more strikingly exemplified than here? At the entrance to our great theatres, in large capitals over the front of the stage, might be written *MUTABILITY*! Does not the curtain that falls each night on the pomps and vanities it was withdrawn awhile to reveal (and the

<sup>1</sup> This lady is not, it is true, at Covent Garden: I wish she were!

## THE FREE ADMISSION

next moment all is dark) afford a fine moral lesson? Here, in small room, is crowded the map of human life; the lengthened, varied scroll is unfolded like rich tapestry with its quaint and flaunting devices spread out; whatever can be saved from the giddy whirl of ever-rolling time and of this round orb, which moves on and never stops,<sup>1</sup> all that can strike the sense, can touch the heart, can stir up laughter or call tears from their secret source, is here treasured up and displayed ostentatiously—here is Fancy's motley wardrobe, the masks of all the characters that were ever played—here is a glass set up clear and large enough to show us our own features and those of all mankind—here, in this enchanted mirror, are represented, not darkly, but in vivid hues and bold relief, the struggle of Life and Death, the momentary pause between the cradle and the grave, with charming hopes and fears, terror and pity in a thousand modes, strange and ghastly apparitions, the events of history, the fictions of poetry (warm from the heart); all these, and more than can be numbered in my feeble page, fill that airy space where the green curtain rises, and haunt it with evanescent shapes and indescribable yearnings.

' See o'er the stage the ghost of Hamlet stalks,  
Othello rages, Desdemona mourns,  
And poor Monimia pours her soul in love.'

Who can collect into one audible pulsation the thoughts and feelings that in the course of his life all these together have occasioned; or what heart, if it could recall them at once, and in their undiminished power and plenitude, would not burst with the load? Let not the style be deemed exaggerated, but tame and creeping, that attempts to do justice to this high and pregnant theme, and let tears blot out the unequal lines that the pen traces! Quaffing these delights, inhaling this atmosphere, brooding over these visions, this long trail of glory, is the possessor of a Free Admission to be blamed if 'he takes his ease' at the play; and turning theatrical recluse, and forgetful of himself and his friends, devotes himself to the study of the drama, and to dreams of the past? By constant habit (having nothing to do, little else to think of), he becomes a tippler of the dews of Castaly—a dram-drinker on Mount Parnassus. He tastes the present moment, while a rich sea of pleasure presses to his lip and engulfs him round. The noise, the glare, the warmth, the company, produce a sort of listless intoxication, and clothe the pathos and the wit with a bodily sense. There is a weight, a closeness even, in the air, that makes it difficult to breathe out of it. The custom of going to the play night after night becomes a relief, a craving, a necessity—one cannot do

<sup>1</sup> 'Mais vois la rapidité de cet astre qui vole et ne s'arrête jamais.'—*New Eloise*.

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without it. To sit alone is intolerable, to be in company is worse; we are attracted with pleasing force to the spot where 'all that mighty heart is beating still.' It is not that perhaps there is any thing new or fine to see—if there is, we attend to it—but at any time, it kills time and saves the trouble of thinking. O, Covent Garden! 'thy *freedom* hath made me effeminate!' It has hardly left me power to write this description of it. I am become its slave, I have no other sense or interest left. There I sit and lose the hours I live beneath the sky, without the power to stir, without any determination to stay. 'Teddy the Tiler' is become familiar to me, and, as it were, a part of my existence: 'Robert the Devil' has cast his spell over me. I have seen both thirty times at least, (no offence to the Management!) and could sit them out thirty times more. I am bed-rid in the lap of luxury; am grown callous and inert with perpetual excitement.

——'What avails from iron chains  
Exempt, if rosy fetters bind as fast?'

I have my favourite box too, as Beau Brummell had his favourite leg; one must decide on something, not to be always deciding. Perhaps I may have my reasons too—perhaps into the box next to mine a Grace enters; perhaps from thence an air divine breathes a glance (of heaven's own brightness), kindles contagious fire;—but let us turn all such thoughts into the lobbies. These may be considered as an Arabesque border round the inclosed tablet of human life. If the Muses reign within, Venus sports heedless, but not unheeded without. Here a bevy of fair damsels, richly clad, knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance, lead on 'the frozen winter and the pleasant spring!' Would I were allowed to attempt a list of some of them, and Cowley's *Gallery* would blush at mine! But this is a licence which only poetry, and not even a Free Admission can give. I can now understand the attachment to a player's life, and how impossible it is for those who are once engaged in it ever to wean themselves from it. If the merely witnessing the bustle and the splendour of the scene as an idle spectator creates such a fascination, and flings such a charm over it, how much more must this be the case with those who have given all their time and attention to it—who regard it as the sole means of distinction—with whom even the monotony and mortifications must please—and who, instead of being passive, casual votaries, are the dispensers of the bounty of the gods, and the high-priests at the altar?

## THE SICK CHAMBER

### ESSAY XXXVII

#### THE SICK CHAMBER

WHAT a difference between this subject and my last—a 'Free Admission!' Yet from the crowded theatre to the sick chamber, from the noise, the glare, the keen delight, to the loneliness, the darkness, the dullness, and the pain, there is but one step. A breath of air, an overhanging cloud effects it; and though the transition is made in an instant, it seems as if it would last for ever. A sudden illness not only puts a stop to the career of our triumphs and agreeable sensations, but blots out and cancels all recollection of and desire for them. We lose the relish of enjoyment; we are effectually cured of our romance. Our bodies are confined to our beds; nor can our thoughts wantonly detach themselves and take the road to pleasure, but turn back with doubt and loathing at the faint, evanescent phantom which has usurped its place. If the folding-doors of the imagination were thrown open or left a-jar, so that from the disordered couch where we lay, we could still hail the vista of the past or future, and see the gay and gorgeous visions floating at a distance, however denied to our embrace, the contrast, though mortifying, might have something soothing in it, the mock-splendour might be the greater for the actual gloom: but the misery is that we cannot conceive any thing beyond or better than the present evil; we are shut up and spell-bound in that, the curtains of the mind are drawn close, we cannot escape from 'the body of this death,' our souls are conquered, dismayed, 'cooped and cabined in,' and thrown with the lumber of our corporeal frames in one corner of a neglected and solitary room. We hate ourselves and every thing else; nor does one ray of comfort 'peep through the blanket of the dark' to give us hope. How should we entertain the image of grace and beauty, when our bodies writhe with pain? To what purpose invoke the echo of some rich strain of music, when we ourselves can scarcely breathe? The very attempt is an impossibility. We give up the vain task of linking delight to agony, of urging torpor into ecstasy, which makes the very heart sick. We feel the present pain, and an impatient longing to get rid of it. This were indeed 'a consummation devoutly to be wished'; on this we are intent, in earnest, inexorable: all else is impertinence and folly; and could we but obtain *ease* (that Goddess of the infirm and suffering) at any price, we think we could forswear all other joy and all other sorrows. *Hoc erat in votis*. All

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other things but our disorder and its cure seem less than nothing and vanity. It assumes a palpable form; it becomes a demon, a spectre, an incubus hovering over and oppressing us: we grapple with it: it strikes its fangs into us, spreads its arms round us, infects us with its breath, glares upon us with its hideous aspect; we feel it take possession of every fibre and of every faculty; and we are at length so absorbed and fascinated by it, that we cannot divert our reflections from it for an instant, for all other things but pain (and that which we suffer most acutely,) appear to have lost their pith and power to interest. They are turned to dust and stubble. This is the reason of the fine resolutions we sometimes form in such cases, and of the vast superiority of a sick bed to the pomps and thrones of the world. We easily renounce wine when we have nothing but the taste of physic in our mouths: the rich banquet tempts us not, when 'our very gorge rises' within us: Love and Beauty fly from a bed twisted into a thousand folds by restless lassitude and tormenting cares: the nerve of pleasure is killed by the pains that shoot through the head or rack the limbs: an indigestion seizes you with its leaden grasp and giant force (down, Ambition!)—you shiver and tremble like a leaf in a fit of the ague (Avarice, let go your palsied hold!). We then are in the mood, without ghostly advice, to betake ourselves to the life of 'hermit poor,

' In pensive place obscure,'—

and should be glad to prevent the return of a fever raging in the blood by feeding on pulse, and slaking our thirst at the limpid brook. These sudden resolutions, however, or 'vows made in pain as violent and void,' are generally of short duration; the excess and the sorrow for it are alike selfish; and those repentances which are the most loud and passionate are the surest to end speedily in a relapse; for both originate in the same cause, the being engrossed by the prevailing feeling (whatever it may be), and an utter incapacity to look beyond it.

' The Devil was sick, the Devil a monk would be :  
The Devil grew well, the Devil a monk was he !'

It is amazing how little effect physical suffering or local circumstances have upon the mind, except while we are subject to their immediate influence. While the impression lasts, they are every thing: when it is gone, they are nothing. We toss and tumble about in a sick bed; we lie on our right side, we then change to the left; we stretch ourselves on our backs, we turn on our faces; we wrap ourselves up under the clothes to exclude the cold, we throw them off to escape the heat and suffocation; we grasp the pillow in agony,

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we fling ourselves out of bed, we walk up and down the room with hasty or feeble steps; we return into bed; we are worn out with fatigue and pain, yet can get no repose for the one, or intermission for the other; we summon all our patience, or give vent to passion and petty rage: nothing avails; we seem wedded to our disease, 'like life and death in disproportion met;' we make new efforts, try new expedients, but nothing appears to shake it off, or promise relief from our grim foe: it infixes its sharp sting into us, or overpowers us by its sickly and stunning weight: every moment is as much as we can bear, and yet there seems no end of our lengthening tortures; we are ready to faint with exhaustion, or work ourselves up to frenzy: we 'trouble deaf Heaven with our bootless prayers:' we think our last hour is come, or peevishly wish it were, to put an end to the scene; we ask questions as to the origin of evil and the necessity of pain; we 'moralise our complaints into a thousand similes'; we deny the use of medicine *in toto*, we have a full persuasion that all doctors are mad or knaves, that our object is to gain relief, and theirs (out of the perversity of human nature, or to seem wiser than we) to prevent it; we catechise the apothecary, rail at the nurse, and cannot so much as conceive the possibility that this state of things should not last for ever; we are even angry at those who would give us encouragement, as if they would make dupes or children of us; we might seek a release by poison, a halter, or the sword, but we have not strength of mind enough—our nerves are too shaken—to attempt even this poor revenge—when lo! a change comes, the spell falls off, and the next moment we forget all that has happened to us. No sooner does our disorder turn its back upon us than we laugh at it. The state we have been in, sounds like a dream, a fable; health is the order of the day, strength is ours *de jure* and *de facto*; and we discard all uncalled-for evidence to the contrary with a smile of contemptuous incredulity, just as we throw our physic-bottles out of the window! I see (as I awake from a short, uneasy doze) a golden light shine through my white window-curtains on the opposite wall:—is it the dawn of a new day, or the departing light of evening? I do not well know, for the opium 'they have drugged my posset with' has made strange havoc with my brain, and I am uncertain whether time has stood still, or advanced, or gone backward. By 'puzzling o'er the doubt,' my attention is drawn a little out of myself to external objects; and I consider whether it would not administer some relief to my monotonous languour, if I could call up a vivid picture of an evening sky I witnessed a short while before, the white fleecy clouds, the azure vault, the verdant fields and balmy air. In vain! The wings of fancy refuse to mount from my bed-side. The air without has

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nothing in common with the closeness within : the clouds disappear, the sky is instantly overcast and black. I walk out in this scene soon after I recover ; and with those favourite and well-known objects interposed, can no longer recall the tumbled pillow, the juleps or the labels, or the unwholesome dungeon in which I was before immured. What is contrary to our present sensations or settled habits, amalgamates indifferently with our belief : the imagination rules over imaginary themes, the senses and custom have a narrower sway, and admit but one guest at a time. It is hardly to be wondered at that we dread physical calamities so little beforehand : we think no more of them the moment after they have happened. *Out of sight, out of mind.* This will perhaps explain why all actual punishment has so little effect ; it is a state contrary to nature, alien to the will. If it does not touch honour and conscience (and where these are not, how can it touch them ?) it goes for nothing : and where these are, it rather sears and hardens them. The gyves, the cell, the meagre fare, the hard labour are abhorrent to the mind of the culprit on whom they are imposed, who carries the love of liberty or indulgence to licentiousness ; and who throws the thought of them behind him (the moment he can evade the penalty,) with scorn and laughter,

‘ Like Samson his green wythes.’<sup>1</sup>

So, in travelling, we often meet with great fatigue and inconvenience from heat or cold, or other accidents, and resolve never to go a journey again ; but we are ready to set off on a new excursion to-morrow. We remember the landscape, the change of scene, the romantic expectation, and think no more of the heat, the noise, and dust. The body forgets its grievances, till they recur ; but imagination, passion, pride, have a longer memory and quicker apprehensions. To the first the pleasure or the pain is nothing when once over ; to the last it is only then that they begin to exist. The line in Metastasio,

‘ The worst of every evil is the fear,’

is true only when applied to this latter sort.—It is curious that, on coming out of a sick-room, where one has been pent some time, and grown weak and nervous, and looking at Nature for the first time, the objects that present themselves have a very questionable and spectral

<sup>1</sup> The thoughts of a captive can no more get beyond his prison-walls than his limbs, unless they are busied in planning an escape ; as, on the contrary, what prisoner, after effecting his escape, ever suffered them to return there, or took common precautions to prevent his own ? We indulge our fancy more than we consult our interest. The sense of personal identity has almost as little influence in practice as it has foundation in theory.

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appearance, the people in the street resemble flies crawling about, and seem scarce half-alive. It is we who are just risen from a torpid and unwholesome state, and who impart our imperfect feelings of existence, health, and motion to others. Or it may be that the violence and exertion of the pain we have gone through make common everyday objects seem unreal and unsubstantial. It is not till we have established ourselves in form in the sitting-room, wheeled round the arm-chair to the fire (for this makes part of our re-introduction to the ordinary modes of being in all seasons,) felt our appetite return, and taken up a book, that we can be considered as at all restored to ourselves. And even then our first sensations are rather empirical than positive; as after sleep we stretch out our hands to know whether we are awake. This is the time for reading. Books are then indeed 'a world, both pure and good,' into which we enter with all our hearts, after our revival from illness and respite from the tomb, as with the freshness and novelty of youth. They are not merely acceptable as without too much exertion they pass the time and relieve *ennui*; but from a certain suspension and deadening of the passions, and abstraction from worldly pursuits, they may be said to bring back and be friendly to the guileless and enthusiastic tone of feeling with which we formerly read them. Sickness has weaned us *pro tempore* from contest and cabal; and we are fain to be docile and children again. All strong changes in our present pursuits throw us back upon the past. This is the shortest and most complete emancipation from our late discomfiture. We wonder that any one who has read *The History of a Foundling* should labour under an indigestion; nor do we comprehend how a perusal of the *Faery Queen* should not ensure the true believer an uninterrupted succession of halcyon days. Present objects bear a retrospective meaning, and point to 'a foregone conclusion.' Returning back to life with half-strung nerves and shattered strength, we seem as when we first entered it with uncertain purposes and faltering aims. The machine has received a shock, and it moves on more tremulously than before, and not all at once in the beaten track. Startled at the approach of death, we are willing to get as far from it as we can by making a proxy of our former selves; and finding the precarious tenure by which we hold existence, and its last sands running out, we gather up and make the most of the fragments that memory has stored up for us. Every thing is seen through a medium of reflection and contrast. We hear the sound of merry voices in the street; and this carries us back to the recollections of some country-town or village-group—

'We see the children sporting on the shore,  
And hear the mighty waters roaring evermore.'



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A cricket chirps on the hearth, and we are reminded of Christmas gambols long ago. The very cries in the street seem to be of a former date; and the dry toast eats very much as it did—twenty years ago. A rose smells doubly sweet, after being stifled with tinctures and essences; and we enjoy the idea of a journey and an inn the more for having been bed-ridden. But a book is the secret and sure charm to bring all these implied associations to a focus. I should prefer an old one, Mr. Lamb's favourite, the *Journey to Lisbon*; or the *Decameron*, if I could get it; but if a new one, let it be *Paul Clifford*. That book has the singular advantage of being written by a gentleman, and not about his own class. The characters he commemorates are every moment at fault between life and death, hunger and a *forced loan* on the public; and therefore the interest they take in themselves, and which we take in them, has no cant or affectation in it, but is 'lively, audible, and full of vent.' A set of well-dressed gentlemen picking their teeth with a graceful air after dinner, endeavouring to keep their cravats from the slightest discomposure, and saying the most insipid things in the most insipid manner, do not make a *scene*. Well, then, I have got the new paraphrase on the *Beggar's Opera*, am fairly embarked on it; and at the end of the first volume, where I am galloping across the heath with the three highwaymen, while the moon is shining full upon them, feel my nerves so braced, and my spirits so exhilarated, that, to say truth, I am scarce sorry for the occasion that has thrown me upon the work and the author—have quite forgot my *Sick Room*, and am more than half ready to recant the doctrine that a *Free-Admission* to the theatre is

—'The true pathos and sublime  
Of human life':—

for I feel as I read that if the stage shows us the masks of men and the pageant of the world, books let us into their souls and lay open to us the secrets of our own. They are the first and last, the most home-felt, the most heart-felt of all our enjoyments.

### ESSAY XXXVIII

#### THE LETTER-BELL

COMPLAINTS are frequently made of the vanity and shortness of human life, when, if we examine its smallest details, they present a world by themselves. The most trifling objects, retraced with the eye of

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memory, assume the vividness, the delicacy, and importance of insects seen through a magnifying glass. 'There is no end of the brilliancy or the variety. The habitual feeling of the love of life may be compared to 'one entire and perfect chrysolite,' which, if analysed, breaks into a thousand shining fragments. Ask the sum-total of the value of human life, and we are puzzled with the length of the account and the multiplicity of items in it: take any one of them apart, and it is wonderful what matter for reflection will be found in it! As I write this, the *Letter-Bell* passes: it has a lively, pleasant sound with it, and not only fills the street with its importunate clamour, but rings clear through the length of many half-forgotten years. It strikes upon the ear, it vibrates to the brain, it wakes me from the dream of time, it flings me back upon my first entrance into life, the period of my first coming up to town, when all around was strange, uncertain, adverse—a hubbub of confused noises, a chaos of shifting objects—and when this sound alone, startling me with the recollection of a letter I had to send to the friends I had lately left, brought me as it were to myself, made me feel that I had links still connecting me with the universe, and gave me hope and patience to persevere. At that loud-tinkling, interrupted sound (now and then), the long line of blue hills near the place where I was brought up waves in the horizon, a golden sunset hovers over them, the dwarf-oaks rustle their red leaves in the evening-breeze, and the road from — to —, by which I first set out on my journey through life, stares me in the face as plain, but from time and change not less visionary and mysterious, than the pictures in the *Pilgrim's Progress*. I should notice, that at this time the light of the French Revolution circled my head like a glory, though dabbled with drops of crimson gore: I walked comfortable and cheerful by its side—

'And by the vision splendid  
Was on my way attended.'

It rose then in the east: it has again risen in the west. Two suns in one day, two triumphs of liberty in one age, is a miracle which I hope the Laureate will hail in appropriate verse. Or may not Mr. Wordsworth give a different turn to the fine passage, beginning—

'What though the radiance which was once so bright,  
Be now for ever vanished from my sight;  
Though nothing can bring back the hour  
Of glory in the grass, of splendour in the flower?'

For is it not brought back, 'like morn risen on mid-night'; and may he not yet greet the yellow light shining on the evening bank with

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eyes of youth, of genius, and freedom, as of yore? No, never! But what would not these persons give for the unbroken integrity of their early opinions—for one unshackled, uncontaminated strain—one *lo paan* to Liberty—one burst of indignation against tyrants and sycophants, who subject other countries to slavery by force, and prepare their own for it by servile sophistry, as we see the huge serpent lick over its trembling, helpless victim with its slime and poison, before it devours it! On every stanza so penned should be written the word RECREANT! Every taunt, every reproach, every note of exultation at restored light and freedom, would recal to them how their hearts failed them in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. And what shall we say to *him*—the sleep-walker, the dreamer, the sophist, the word-hunter, the craver after sympathy, but still vulnerable to truth, accessible to opinion, because not sordid or mechanical? The Bourbons being no longer tied about his neck, he may perhaps recover his original liberty of speculating; so that we may apply to him the lines about his own *Ancient Mariner*—

‘ And from his neck so free  
The Albatross fell off, and sank  
Like lead into the sea.’

This is the reason I can write an article on the *Letter-Bell*, and other such subjects; I have never given the lie to my own soul. If I have felt any impression once, I feel it more strongly a second time; and I have no wish to revile or discard my best thoughts. There is at least a thorough *keeping* in what I write—not a line that betrays a principle or disguises a feeling. If my wealth is small, it all goes to enrich the same heap; and trifles in this way accumulate to a tolerable sum. Or if the *Letter-Bell* does not lead me a dance into the country, it fixes me in the thick of my town recollections, I know not how long ago. It was a kind of alarm to break off from my work when there happened to be company to dinner or when I was going to the play. *That* was going to the play, indeed, when I went twice a year, and had not been more than half a dozen times in my life. Even the idea that any one else in the house was going, was a sort of reflected enjoyment, and conjured up a lively anticipation of the scene. I remember a Miss D——, a maiden lady from Wales (who in her youth was to have been married to an earl), tantalised me greatly in this way, by talking all day of going to see Mrs. Siddons’ ‘airs and graces’ at night in some favourite part; and when the *Letter-Bell* announced that the time was approaching, and its last receding sound lingered on the ear, or was lost in silence, how anxious and uneasy I became, lest she and her companion should

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not be in time to get good places—lest the curtain should draw up before they arrived—and lest I should lose one line or look in the intelligent report which I should hear the next morning! The punctuating of time at that early period—every thing that gives it an articulate voice—seems of the utmost consequence; for we do not know what scenes in the *ideal* world may run out of them: a world of interest may hang upon every instant, and we can hardly sustain the weight of future years which are contained in embryo in the most minute and inconsiderable passing events. How often have I put off writing a letter till it was too late! How often had to run after the postman with it—now missing, now recovering the sound of his bell—breathless, angry with myself—then hearing the welcome sound come full round a corner—and seeing the scarlet costume which set all my fears and self-reproaches at rest! I do not recollect having ever repented giving a letter to the postman, or wishing to retrieve it after he had once deposited it in his bag. What I have once set my hand to, I take the consequences of, and have been always pretty much of the same humour in this respect. I am not like the person who, having sent off a letter to his mistress, who resided a hundred and twenty miles in the country, and disapproving, on second thoughts, of some expressions contained in it, took a post-chaise and four to follow and intercept it the next morning. At other times, I have sat and watched the decaying embers in a little *back* painting-room (just as the wintry day declined), and brooded over the half-finished copy of a Rembrandt, or a landscape by Vangoyen, placing it where it might catch a dim gleam of light from the fire; while the Letter-Bell was the only sound that drew my thoughts to the world without, and reminded me that I had a task to perform in it. As to that landscape, methinks I see it now—

‘The slow canal, the yellow-blossomed vale,  
The willow-tufted bank, the gliding sail.’

There was a windmill, too, with a poor low clay-built cottage beside it:—how delighted I was when I had made the tremulous, undulating reflection in the water, and saw the dull canvas become a lucid mirror of the commonest features of nature! Certainly, painting gives one a strong interest in nature and humanity (it is not the *dandy-school* of morals or sentiment)—

‘While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things.’

Perhaps there is no part of a painter’s life (if we must tell ‘the

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secrets of the prison-house') in which he has more enjoyment of himself and his art, than that in which after his work is over, and with furtive, sidelong glances at what he has done, he is employed in washing his brushes and cleaning his pallet for the day. Afterwards, when he gets a servant in livery to do this for him, he may have other and more ostensible sources of satisfaction—greater splendour, wealth, or fame; but he will not be so wholly in his art, nor will his art have such a hold on him as when he was too poor to transfer its meanest drudgery to others—too humble to despise aught that had to do with the object of his glory and his pride, with that on which all his projects of ambition or pleasure were founded. 'Entire affection scorneth nicer hands.' When the professor is above this mechanical part of his business, it may have become a *stalking-horse* to other worldly schemes, but is no longer his *hobby-horse* and the delight of his inmost thoughts—

'His shame in crowds, his solitary pride!'

I used sometimes to hurry through this part of my occupation, while the Letter-Bell (which was my dinner-bell) summoned me to the fraternal board, where youth and hope

'Made good digestion wait on appetite  
And health on both—'

or oftener I put it off till after dinner, that I might loiter longer and with more luxurious indolence over it, and connect it with the thoughts of my next day's labours.

The dustman's-bell, with its heavy, monotonous noise, and the brisk, lively tinkle of the muffin-bell, have something in them, but not much. They will bear dilating upon with the utmost licence of inventive prose. All things are not alike *conductors* to the imagination. A learned Scotch professor found fault with an ingenious friend and arch-critic for cultivating a rookery on his grounds: the professor declared 'he would as soon think of encouraging a *froggery*.' This was barbarous as it was senseless. Strange, that a country that has produced the Scotch novels and Gertrude of Wyoming should want sentiment!

The postman's double knock at the door the next morning is 'more german to the matter.' How that knock often goes to the heart! We distinguish to a nicety the arrival of the Two-penny or the General Post. The summons of the latter is louder and heavier, as bringing news from a greater distance, and as, the longer it has been delayed, fraught with a deeper interest. We catch the sound of what is to be paid—eight-pence, nine-pence, a shilling—and our

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hopes generally rise with the postage. How we are provoked at the delay in getting change—at the servant who does not hear the door ! Then if the postman passes, and we do not hear the expected knock, what a pang is there ! It is like the silence of death—of hope ! We think he does it on purpose, and enjoys all the misery of our suspense. I have sometimes walked out to see the Mail-Coach pass, by which I had sent a letter, or to meet it when I expected one. I never see a Mail-Coach, for this reason, but I look at it as the bearer of glad tidings—the messenger of fate. I have reason to say so. The finest sight in the metropolis is that of the Mail-Coaches setting off from Piccadilly. The horses paw the ground, and are impatient to be gone, as if conscious of the precious burden they convey. There is a peculiar secrecy and despatch, significant and full of meaning, in all the proceedings concerning them. Even the outside passengers have an erect and supercilious air, as if proof against the accidents of the journey. In fact, it seems indifferent whether they are to encounter the summer's heat or winter's cold, since they are borne on through the air in a winged chariot. The Mail-Carts drive up ; the transfer of packages is made ; and, at a signal given, they start off, bearing the irrevocable scrolls that give wings to thought, and that bind or sever hearts for ever. How we hate the Putney and Brentford stages that draw up in a line after they are gone ! Some persons think the sublimest object in nature is a ship launched on the bottom of the ocean : but give me, for my private satisfaction, the Mail-Coaches that pour down Piccadilly of an evening, tear up the pavement, and devour the way before them to the Land's-End !

In Cowper's time, Mail-Coaches were hardly set up ; but he has beautifully described the coming in of the Post-Boy :—

' Hark ! 'tis the twanging horn o'er yonder bridge,  
That with its wearisome but needful length  
*Bestrides the wintry flood, in which the moon*  
Sees her unwrinkled face reflected bright :—  
He comes, the herald of a noisy world,  
With spattered boots, strapped waist, and frozen locks ;  
News from all nations lumbering at his back.  
True to his charge, the close-packed load behind.  
Yet careless what he brings, his one concern  
Is to conduct it to the destined inn ;  
And having dropped the expected bag, pass on.  
He whistles as he goes, light-hearted wretch !  
Cold and yet cheerful ; messenger of grief  
Perhaps to thousands, and of joy to some ;  
To him indifferent whether grief or joy.  
Houses in ashes and the fall of stocks,

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Births, deaths, and marriages, epistles wet  
With tears that trickled down the writer's cheeks  
Fast as the periods from his fluent quill,  
Or charged with amorous sighs of absent swains  
Or nymphs responsive, equally affect  
His horse and him, unconscious of them all.'

And yet, notwithstanding this, and so many other passages that seem like the very marrow of our being, Lord Byron denies that Cowper was a poet!—The Mail-Coach is an improvement on the Post-Boy; but I fear it will hardly bear so poetical a description. The picturesque and dramatic do not keep pace with the useful and mechanical. The telegraphs that lately communicated the intelligence of the new revolution to all France within a few hours, are a wonderful contrivance; but they are less striking and appalling than the beacon-fires (mentioned by Æschylus), which, lighted from hill-top to hill-top, announced the taking of Troy, and the return of Agamemnon.

## NOTES





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### ESSAY I. ON THE PRESENT STATE OF PARLIAMENTARY ELOQUENCE

*The London Magazine*, October 1820; 'Table-Talk, No. iv.,' signed 'T.' First reprinted by Waller and Glover.

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5. 'Such a one,' etc. The Letters of the younger Pliny, i. 20.  
*A former one, on nearly the same subject.* 'On the Difference between Writing and Speaking,' Hazlitt's second 'Table-Talk' for *The London Magazine*, which he reprinted in *The Plain Speaker* (vol. xii. pp. 262 *et seq.*).  
*Which I have already ascribed.* See *ibid.*, p. 268.  
*Sir James Mackintosh and Mr. Brougham.* See *The Spirit of the Age*.
6. 'Domestic treason [malice domestic] foreign levy.' *Macbeth*, iii. 2. 25.  
*'Make a wanton.'* *Hamlet*, v. 2. 310.
7. *Diagonal side-long movements.* Cf. Hazlitt on Coleridge: 'He moves in an unaccountable diagonal between truth and falsehood' (vol. vii. p. 116).  
*Sir James Mackintosh's maiden speech.* Cf. vol. xi. pp. 96-7, and note.
8. *Sir Samuel Romilly* (1757-1818), law reformer and Whig M.P. from 1806. He was returned for Westminster in 1818, with the support of Bentham, and committed suicide in the same year.  
*'Plays round the bead,' etc.* Pope, *An Essay on Man*, iv. 254.  
*'Roll all his strength,' etc.*  

'Let us roll all our strength and all  
Our sweetness up into one ball.'  
Marvell, 'To His Coy Mistress,' 41-2.
9. 'Kindle them,' etc. *Comus*, 794-5.  
*A good bater.* See vol. iv., note to p. 103.  
*A Back-bone debater.* The *N.E.D.* has no reference to this usage.  
*... the first honours of the State!* To this passage the editor (John Scott) attaches the following footnote in the magazine: 'We must not be understood as at all participating in these sentiments: this may indeed be owing to our infirmity of judgment; and certainly the general ability of the article tells against any difference of opinion.—Ed.' For Scott on Hazlitt's politics see the present editor's *Life*, pp. 292-4.  
*The late Mr. Whitbread.* Samuel Whitbread (1758-1815), the famous Whig member.
10. *One on the Princess of Wales.* On March 17, 1813.  
*'Ample scope,' etc.* Cf. Gray, *The Bard*, 51.  
*Mr. Tierney.* George Tierney (1761-1830), M.P. continuously from 1789 to his death. He was virtually leader of the Opposition during the Liverpool ministry, but never technically held the position owing to the Whig distrust of his unaristocratic birth.
11. *Mr. Vansittart.* Nicholas Vansittart (1766-1851), Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1812 to 1822, was created Baron Bexley in 1823.

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11. *Being present on a Shrove-Tuesday.* In allusion to the old custom of 'threshing the fat hen' at Shrovetide. See Hone's *Every-Day Book* (i. 247-50).  
*Mr. Ponsonby.* George Ponsonby (1755-1817). He was Lord Chancellor of Ireland in the Fox-Grenville ministry, and official leader of the Opposition from 1812.  
*Mr. Grattan.* Henry Grattan (1746-1820), Irish orator. M.P. for Dublin from 1806 to his death.
12. *'Would lengthen [stretch] out,' etc.* *Macbeth*, iv. 1. 117.  
*To be said or sung.* Cf. vol. v. p. 264, and note to p. 371.  
*Note.* *A Member of Congress.* Daniel Webster (1782-1852) is probably alluded to. His famous oration on the bicentenary of the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers was delivered in the following December.  
*It is a custom, etc.* *Hamlet*, i. 4. 15.
13. *Mr. Plunkett.* William Conyngham Plunket (1764-1854), Irish lawyer, M.P. for Dublin University from 1812. He was created first Baron Plunket in 1827.  
*Roubilliac.* Cf. vol. xii. p. 89 and note. His remark, quoted by Hazlitt, was made to Reynolds. See Northcote's *Life of Reynolds*, p. 44.  
*Mr. Banks.* Henry Banks (1757-1834), M.P. for Corfe Castle (1780-1826).  
*Mr. Charles Yorke.* Charles Philip Yorke (1764-1834), who had been conspicuous in the stormy privilege debates of 1810. He was at this time M.P. for Liskeard.  
*Mr. Secretary Peel.* Sir Robert Peel (1788-1850), then Chief Secretary for Ireland and a strong opponent of Catholic Emancipation.  
*'Without o'erflowing, full.'* Sir John Denham, *Cooper's Hill*, 192.  
*Note.* *Mr. Phillips.* See vol. xi. p. 135 and note.  
*'Like Juno's swans,' etc.* *As You Like It*, i. 3. 77.
14. *It was but indifferently reported, etc.* As to Hazlitt's own difficulty in reporting it, see *Memoirs* (1867), i. 196.  
*The present men.* Lord Liverpool's ministry, which held office continuously from 1812 to 1827.  
*'Come then, expressive silence,' etc.* Thomson, *A Hymn*, 118.  
*Note 2.* *'That speech,' etc.* This famous saying is usually credited to Talleyrand, but Voltaire had said much the same thing (*Dialogues*, xiv. *Le Chapon et la Poularde*).  
*Isabey.* Jean Baptiste Isabey's (1767-1855) picture of 'The Congress of Vienna' is at Windsor Castle.
15. *Mr. Alderman Wood.* See vol. viii. p. 63 and note.  
*Mr. Waithman.* See vol. x. p. 246 and note.  
*Sir W. Curtis.* See vol. viii. p. 112 and note.  
*Mr. Wilberforce.* See *The Spirit of the Age*.  
*'In many a winding bout,' etc.* Cf. *L'Allegro*, 139-40.  
*'But 'tis the fall,' etc.* Pope, *Epilogue to the Satires*, i. 144-5.
16. *His humanity is at the horizon.* See vol. viii., note to p. 150.  
*'Out upon such [this] half-faced fellowship.'* 1 *Henry IV.*, i. 3. 208.  
*Mr. C. Wynne.* See vol. vii., note to p. 189.  
*Summum jus, etc.* Cicero, *De Officiis*, i. 10.  
*'As notorious as the sun,' etc.* Unidentified.
17. *Garrow.* Sir William Garrow. Cf. vol. vii. p. 140 and note.  
*Mr. Canning . . . a chapter on himself.* Cf. 'Character of Mr. Canning,' in vol. xi.  
*The dazzling fence of argument.* Elsewhere Hazlitt quotes 'The dazzling fence of controversy.' Cf. *Comus*, 790-1.

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17. 'The punto,' etc. Cf. *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, II. 3. 26; and *Romeo and Juliet*, II. 4. 27.
18. 'No further seek,' etc. Cf. Gray's *Elegy*, 125-6.  
 Join-band. 'Cursive handwriting' (*N.E.D.*).  
 'Hear him's that now rise,' etc. Hazlitt is quoting Burke, on the 'independent' politician: 'All eyes were fixed on them, all ears open to hear them; each party gaped, and looked alternately for their vote, almost to the end of their speeches. While the House hung in this uncertainty, now the *bear him* rose from his side—now they rebelled from the other.' *Speech on American Taxation*, 1774 (*Works*, Bohn, I. 429).
19. 'Swinging slow,' etc. *Il Penseroso*, 76.  
 'Mother-wit,' etc. 'With Nature's Mother-Wit, and Arts unknown before.'  
 Dryden, *Alexander's Feast*, 166.  
*As Sidrophel and Whackum did.* *Hudibras*, Part II. Canto II.  
 'Sole sovereign sway,' etc. Cf. *Macbeth*, I. 5. 71.  
 'What's serious,' etc. Cf. vol. XI., note to p. 158.
20. 'A windy fan,' etc.  
 'As those same plumes, so seem'd he vaine and light,  
 That by his gate might easily appeare;  
 For stille he far'd as dauncing in delight,  
 And in his hand a windy fan did beare.'

*The Faerie Queene*, III. xii. 8.

*He winks and shuts his apprehension up.* Unacknowledged from Marston, *Antonio's Revenge*, prologue. A favourite Hazlitt quotation.

'Trifles,' etc. *Othello*, III. 3. 322.

'To make the worse,' etc. *Paradise Lost*, Book II. 113-14.

'Takes [off] the rose,' etc. Cf. *Hamlet*, III. 4. 42.

Note. *His panegyric on the late King.* Speech on the Windsor Establishment of George III, February 25, 1819 (*Speeches*, ed. Therry, iv. 61 *et seq.*). For the Liverpool Dinner Speech (March 18, 1820), cf. vol. VIII. p. 153.

21. *Lord Grenville.* William Wyndham (1759-1834), created Baron Grenville in 1790.

*The Marquis of Wellesley.* Cf. *Political Essays* (vol. VII. p. 23 and note).

*Pierre curses the Senate.* In Otway's *Venice Preserved*, Act IV.

*Lord Holland.* Henry Richard Vassall Fox, third Lord Holland (1773-1840).

*Lord Ellenborough.* Cf. vol. VII. p. 139 and note.

'In the extremity of an oath.' Unidentified.

*Lord Eldon.* See *The Spirit of the Age*.

'His face 'twixt tears,' etc. Unidentified.

*Lord Erskine.* Cf. vol. VII. p. 20 and note.

## ESSAY II. ON CONSISTENCY OF OPINION

*The London Magazine*, November 1821: 'Table-Talk, No. XII.,' signed 'T. First reprinted by Hazlitt's son (with omissions) in *Winterslow* (1850).

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22. 'Servetur ad imum,' etc. Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 126-7.  
 'It is the eye of childhood,' etc. *Macbeth*, II. 2. 54.  
 'Where the treasure is,' etc. *S. Matthew*, vi. 21.  
 'To be wise,' etc. Cf. 'Let it be virtuous to be obstinate.' *Coriolanus*, v. 3. 26.

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22. *Mr.* —. Northcote, no doubt, who told Haydon that he was so delighted with the *Catalogue* that he 'ordered a long candle and went to bed to read it in ecstasy.' *Life of Haydon* (ed. T. Taylor), i. 376.
24. *Somewhere in Don Quixote.* Cf. 'Mr. Jeffrey's Resignation' in vol. xx. 'Sots,' etc. Pope, *An Essay on Man*, iv. 215.  
'I had rather bear,' etc. Cf. i *Henry IV.*, iii. 1. 131.
25. 'Amazed the very faculties,' etc. *Hamlet*, ii. 2. 591.  
'So small a drop,' etc. *Cymbeline*, iv. 2. 304.  
*Applied for an injunction,* etc. A hit at Southey. See vol. vii. p. 176 and note.
26. *He disfranchises the whole rustic population of Westmoreland.* Cf. Hazlitt's *Examiner* letter (July 5, 1818), 'Mr. Wordsworth and the Westmoreland Election,' in vol. xix.  
'The wreck of matter,' etc. Addison, *Cato*, Act v. Scene 1.  
*Constitutional Association.* See vol. viii., note to p. 190.  
*A gentleman . . . a romantic acquaintance of his.* Charles Lloyd and Wordsworth, respectively, the former, who had settled in London in 1819 after nearly twenty years' residence in the Lakes, being Hazlitt's 'informant' referred to in the text. The passage led to correspondence between Wordsworth and Lloyd, a copy of which, sent by Lloyd to Talfourd, was sold at Sotheby's in 1929.  
*A certain lord.* Lord Lonsdale perhaps.
27. 'He saw nothing to admire,' etc. Cf. *A Reply to Z* (vol. ix. p. 5).  
*Mr. Coleridge sets down.* Cf. *Biographia Literaria*, chap. xxii.  
*Contra audentior ito.* *Æneid*, vi. 95.  
'Whose genius,' etc. Cowper, *The Task*, The Garden, 255-6.  
'Like a worm,' etc. 'Let me not like a worm go by the way.' *The Canterbury Tales*, The Clerke's Tale, 880.
28. *Exposed to the pelting,* etc. Cf. *King Lear*, iii. 4. 29.  
'There's sympathy.' *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, ii. 1. 7.  
*The gardens of Alcinous.* *Odyssey*, vi. xiii.  
'Ancestral voices.' Coleridge, *Kubla Khan*, 29.  
'He looks up with awe,' etc. Cf. Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution* (ed. Payne, p. 101).  
'I've heard of hearts unkind,' etc. Wordsworth, *Simon Lee*, 93-6.  
'Every thing by turns,' etc. Cf. Dryden, *Absalom and Achitophel*, 1. 548.  
*A young student,* etc. Hazlitt's brother-in-law, John Stoddart, is referred to. Cf. *Political Essays*.
29. 'Perpetual volley,' etc. Cf. 'Arrowy sleet, skin-piercing volley.' Cowper, *The Task*, The Winter Morning Walk, 140-1.  
'A thorn in the side of freedom.' Cf. 2 *Corinthians*, xii.
30. —. Northcote.  
'Though truth be truth,' etc. Cf. *Othello*, i. 1. 71-3.  
'Pride elevates,' etc. Cf. 'Hope elevates, and joy brightens his crest.' *Paradise Lost*, ix. 633-4.
31. 'From morn to noon,' etc. *Ibid.*, i. 742-4.  
*Cried up to the top of the compass.* Cf. *Hamlet*, iii. 2. 391, and ii. 2. 363.  
'In all things,' etc. Cf. 'In all things . . . a lawful and regulated enjoyment is the best security against debauchery and excess.' Speech on Economical Reform (Bohn, ii. 105).
32. 'To have done,' etc. *Troilus and Cressida*, iii. 3. 151.  
'With one consent,' etc. *Ibid.*, iii. 3. 176.  
'Like a fashionable boast.' *Ibid.*, iii. 3. 165.  
'Noise,' etc. Cf. *Hamlet*, iii. 2. 14.

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32. 'Tell me your company,' etc. Cf. the well-known proverb quoted in *Don-Quixote*, Part II. chap. xxiii.  
 34. 'Linked [bound] each to each,' etc. Wordsworth, 'My heart leaps up,' etc., 9.

### ESSAY III. ON THE SPIRIT OF PARTISANSHIP

*The London Magazine*, December 1821; 'Table-Talk, No. XIII.,' signed 'T.' First reprinted by Hazlitt's son in *Sketches and Essays* (1839).

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34. 'Ever strong,' etc. *King John*, III. 1. 117.  
 36. 'In their generation,' etc. Cf. *S. Luke*, xvi. 8.  
 'The milk of human kindness.' *Macbeth*, I. 5. 18.  
 'Stuff o' the conscience.' *Othello*, I. 2. 22.  
 'Instead of a softness,' etc. Cf. vol. XIV. p. 121 and note.  
 'Turned to the stroke,' etc. Cowper, *The Task*, 'The Time-Piece', 324-5.  
 Cullible. I.e. 'gullible.' The variant form is rare (*N.E.D.*). Cf. vol. VII., note to p. 90.  
 'Though sun and moon,' etc. *Comus*, 374-5.  
 'To do a great right,' etc. *The Merchant of Venice*, IV. 1. 216.  
 37. 'The very arm,' etc. Cf. *Antony and Cleopatra*, I. 5. 23.  
 'Entire affection scorneth [hateth],' etc. *The Faerie Queene*, I. VIII. 40.  
 'Our bane,' etc. Addison, *Cato*, Act v. Scene 1.  
 38. 'Screwed to the sticking place.' Cf. *Macbeth*, I. 7. 60.  
 'Away to Heaven,' etc. *Romeo and Juliet*, III. 1. 128.  
 'To grinning scorn.'

'To bitter Scorn a sacrifice,  
 And grinning infamy.'

Gray, *On a Distant Prospect of Eton College*, 73-4.

- A more feeling disputation.* Unacknowledged from 1 *Henry IV.*, III. 1. 206.  
 39. 'Cooped and cabined in.' 'Cabin'd, cribbed, confin'd.' *Macbeth*, III. 4. 24.  
 'In peace,' etc. *Henry V.*, III. 1. 3.  
 40. l. 11. 'By a word speaking' in the magazine and *Sketches and Essays*.  
 'Those who are not for us,' etc. Cf. *S. Matthew*, xii. 30.  
 'Letting our frail thoughts,' etc. Cf. *Lycidas*, 153.  
 41. 'Nothing but vanity,' etc. Unidentified.  
 'Each lolls his tongue out,' etc. Unidentified.  
*John Bull.* Theodore Hook's *John Bull*, founded in December 1820. Hazlitt very soon revised the opinion here expressed. Cf. *ante*, pp. 106, 307, and introductory note to the *Liber Amoris* (vol. IX.).  
 42. —. Coleridge, perhaps, and, below, *The Courier*.  
 43. 'Our wishers are unwrung.' *Hamlet*, III. 2. 253.  
*Burke represented.* *A Letter to a Noble Lord* (Bohn, v. 142).  
*Bishop Taylor used to reprimand.* Hazlitt was perhaps thinking of the saying attributed to John Bradford (1510?-55), who, on seeing some criminals going to execution, is said to have exclaimed: 'But for the grace of God, there goes John Bradford.'

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## ESSAY IV. ON NICKNAMES

*The Edinburgh Magazine*, September 1818, signed 'W.H.' First reprinted by Hazlitt's son in *Sketches and Essays* (1839).

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44. 'Hae nugae,' etc. Cf. Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 451-2.
45. 'The priest,' etc. *The Beggar's Opera*, Act 1. Scene 1.  
*An anti-Jacobin critic denounces.* Hazlitt alludes to a note in the 'Beauties of the Anti-Jacobin,' denouncing Coleridge, Lamb, and Southey. Cf. vol. xvi. p. 139 and note.  
'Sound them,' etc. *Julius Cæsar*, I. 2. 145.
46. *I have beard an eminent character boast.* Coleridge. Cf. vol. xiv. p. 188 and note.  
*Mr. Southey asks triumphantly.* Cf. *Political Essays* (vol. vii. p. 217).  
'Hath Britain all the sun,' etc. *Cymbeline*, III. 4. 139.
47. 'Brevity is the soul of wit.' *Hamlet*, II. 2. 90.  
'The unbought grace of life,' etc. Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution* (ed. Payne, p. 89).  
'Leave the will puzzled,' etc. *Ibid.*, p. 103.  
'Bring but a Scotsman,' etc. Burns, *The Author's Earnest Cry and Prayer*, etc. Postscript, St. 4.
48. 'As rage,' etc. Cf. *Troilus and Cressida*, I. 3. 52.  
'A nickname is the heaviest stone,' etc. Cf. 'It is the heaviest stone that melancholy can throw at a man, to tell him he is at the end of his nature.' Sir Thomas Browne, *Hydriotaphia*, IV. 23.
49. *As Canning pelted a noble lord,* etc. Canning ridiculed Henry Addington (afterwards Lord Sidmouth) under the title of the 'Doctor.' His father was well known as a 'mad' doctor.  
'With so small [as little] a web,' etc. *Othello*, II. 1. 169.  
*It was pretended at one time.* Cf. *The Life of Napoleon*.
50. *Nicholas Vansittart.* Cf. ante, p. 11 and note, and *Political Essays*.  
*Causa causae*, etc. Proverbial.  
'A starling,' etc. 1 *Henry IV.*, I. 3. 224.
51. *Stat nominis umbra.* Lucan, *Pharsalia*, I. 135.

## ESSAY V. ON FASHION

*The Edinburgh Magazine*, September 1818, signed 'W.H.' First reprinted by Hazlitt's son in *Sketches and Essays* (1839).

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51. 'Born of nothing,' etc. Cf. 'Begot upon itself, born on itself,' *Othello*, III. 4. 161.  
'His garment,' etc. *The Faerie Queene*, III. xii. 8.
52. 'The great vulgar and the small.' Cowley, *Horace's Odes*, III. 1.  
'The fashion of an hour old,' etc. Unidentified.
53. *Lord Foppington.* In Vanbrugh's *The Relapse*.
54. 'The sign of an inward,' etc. Cf. *Book of Common Prayer*, the Catechism.  
'And are, when unadorned,' etc. Thomson, *The Seasons*, Autumn, 206.  
'The city madam' [woman], etc. *As You Like It*, II. 7. 74.  
'In the grand carnival,' etc. 'In the masquerades of the grand carnival of our age, whimsical adventures happen.' Burke, *A Letter to a Noble Lord* (Bohn, p. 113).  
'The age is grown so picked,' etc. *Hamlet*, V. 1. 151.
55. *The story in Peregrine Pickle.* Chap. lxxvii.  
'Lisping and ambling,' etc. Cf. *Hamlet*, III. 1. 151.

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56. 'In a high or low degree.' Cf. Pope, *Epilogue to the Satires*, l. 137.  
 'And thin partitions,' etc. Dryden, *Abraham and Achitophel*, l. 164.  
 'Kings are naturally,' etc. Burke, *Speech on Economical Reform* (*Works*, Bohn, II. 106).

### ESSAY VI. THOUGHTS ON TASTE

*The Edinburgh Magazine*, October 1818 and July 1819, signed 'M.N.' First reprinted by Hazlitt's son (together with another and much later paper on 'Taste,' for which see vol. xx. of the present edition) in *Sketches and Essays* (1839).

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57. 'He had found a few pearls,' etc. *Œuvres*, I. 58. July 19, 1776.  
 'Rich as the oozy bottom,' etc. *Henry V.*, I. 2. 164 (Pope's text).  
 'Or like a gate of steel,' etc. *Troilus and Cressida*, III. 3. 121.  
 58. 'Damns him,' etc. Cf. *Much Ado About Nothing*, IV. 3. 59.  
 'Lay their choppy fingers,' etc. *Macbeth*, I. 3. 44.  
 'Have built high towers,' etc. *Paradise Lost*, I. 749.  
 'Majestic though in ruin.' *Ibid.*, II. 305.  
 'Innocence 'likened heaven.' 'O innocence deserving Paradise.' *Ibid.*, v. 44-56.  
 59. 'In tones,' etc. *Paradise Regained*, IV. 255.  
 'Ulysses makes a pun.' *Odyssey*, ix. 403-12.  
 'The author of the 'Friend,' etc. Coleridge may have said this to Hazlitt himself. He described Pope's writings as 'a conjunction disjunctive of epigrams' (*Biographia Literaria*, chap. I.). For his views on French Tragedy, see *ibid.*, Satyrane's Letters, Letter II.  
 'The author of the 'Excursion,' etc. Cf. vol. IV., p. 116 and note.  
 'Not to admire,' etc. 'Not to admire is all the art I know,' quoted by Pope from Creech's translation of Horace. See *Imitations of Horace*, Book I. Epistle vi. 1.  
 Note. *Non satis est*, etc. Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 99.  
 61. *Drawcansir*. See vol. XI., note to p. 93.  
 'Instead of making a disposition.' The instalment of July 1819 begins at this point, with editorial note: 'This Essay is a conclusion of some thoughts on the same subject, in our Number for October 1818.'  
 'Hope told a flattering tale.' An anonymous song sung to Paisiello's famous air, 'Nel cor più non mi sento,' from *La Molinara*.  
 'Pierceable.' 'Not perceable with any power of any starr' (*The Faerie Queene*, I. i. 7) is quoted elsewhere by Hazlitt.  
 Note. *An English pupil*. Hazlitt himself, during his residence in Paris in 1802-3.  
 62. 'The drops which sacred joy [pity],' etc. *As You Like It*, II. 7. 123.  
 Rembrandt's picture of *Jacob's Dream*. See *Sketches of the Picture Galleries* (vol. x. p. 21).  
 Note 1. *Miss Stephens*. Catherine Stephens (1794-1882). Cf. *A View of the English Stage*.  
 Note 2. *Mr. Alston*. Washington Allston (1779-1843), the 'American Titian.'  
*Vitruvius*. Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, Roman architect.  
*Palladio*. Andrea Palladio (1508-80), Italian writer and architect.  
 63. 'Swept and garnished.' *S. Matthew*, xii. 44.  
 'Knowledge at each entrance,' etc. *Paradise Lost*, III. 50.  
 'Unwise.' Cf. Pope, *Essay on Criticism*, 391.  
*Mr. Wordsworth once said*. In Hazlitt's hearing, presumably.



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64. 'Nor seem'd [appeared], etc. *Paradise Lost*, i. 592-4.  
*The preference given, etc.* A review of *Human Life* by Jeffrey in *The Edinburgh Review* (xxx. 325) contains a contemptuous reference to 'a Lakish ditty.'  
*Better than nothing.* At this point in the Magazine there is a footnote by the editor: 'We have not ventured to make any change in the words of the ingenious essayist, although we are by no means ourselves of opinion either that Mr. Rogers's poem on *Human Life* is *nothing*, or Mr. Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* only *something*.' The note adds: 'Who told this lively writer that Mr. Southey ever preferred the *Excursion* to the *Paradise Lost*?'  
*'Carnation,' etc.* *Henry V.*, ii. 3. 35.  
 65. *I know an admirer of Don Quixote, etc.* This was Lamb. See vol. xii. p. 36.  
*An old friend.* Joseph Fawcett, no doubt. See vol. viii. pp. 224-5.  
*'Cry out upon him.'* Cf. *Hamlet*, ii. 2. 363.

### ESSAY VII. CHARACTER OF THE COUNTRY PEOPLE

*The Examiner*, July 18, 1819, signed 'X.Y.Z.' First reprinted by Waller and Glover.

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66. 'Here be truths.' This is a saying, not of Dogberry, but of Pompey, in *Measure for Measure*, ii. 1. 131.  
*'Mountain foreigner.'* *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, i. 1. 166.  
*'Retired from public haunts.'* Cf. 'This our life exempt from public haunt,' etc. *As You Like It*, ii. 1. 15.  
*Lord Foppington.* In Vanbrugh's *The Relapse*.  
*A philosophical poet, etc.* Coleridge, probably.  
*'Pelting villages.'* *King Lear*, ii. 3. 18.  
*'A crew of patches,' etc.* *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, iii. 2. 9.  
*P—t—n.* Pitton, a small village near Winterslow.  
*My friend C— L—.* Charles Lamb, who went with Hazlitt from Winterslow to Oxford in August, 1810. See *Life*, p. 127.  
*'Lively Lincoln-green.'* Cf. 'He stood in simple Lincoln green,' Scott, *The Lady of the Lake*, Canto vi. Stanza xxvi.  
*'Fearing no colours.'* Cf. *Twelfth Night*, i. 5. 6.  
 67. 'Songs of delight,' etc. Unidentified.  
 68. 'Be trampled in the mire,' etc. Cf. Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution* (ed. Payne, p. 93).  
*A mischievous wag, etc.* Perhaps Lamb's schoolfellow, Bobbie Allen, who visited Scotland and the Lakes with Dr. Stoddart in 1802. Lamb describes him in 'Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago.'  
*'The spinsters,' etc.* *Twelfth Night*, ii. 4. 45.  
*'May [shall] I not take mine ease at mine inn?'* *Henry IV.*, iii. 3. 93.  
*While I am writing this.* At Winterslow Hut.  
*A few odd volumes of old plays and novels.* For the preparation of the *Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth*. Cf. introductory note, in vol. vi.  
*W—'s old Molly.* Wordsworth's servant. Cf. *The Life of Napoleon* (vol. xv. p. 307).  
*'Fleet the golden time,' etc.* Cf. *As You Like It*, i. 1. 124.  
 69. *Like the Athenians of old.* *Acts*, xvii. 21.  
*'Giving to airy nothing,' etc.* *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, v. 1. 16.  
*They tell and believe all incredible things.* Cf. vol. xvi., note to p. 62.  
*To elevate and surprise.* The Duke of Buckingham, *The Rehearsal*, Act 1. Scene 1.

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69. 'But I told him,' etc. *Henry V.*, II. 3. 22-3.  
 70. *They are of the earth, earthy.* *St. John*, iii. 31.  
     'Sufficient to the day,' etc. *S. Matthew*, vi. 34.  
     'Twould thin the land,' etc. *The Beggar's Opera*, Act III. Scene 4.  
 71. 'Anon as patient,' etc. *Cf. Hamlet*, v. 1. 309.

### ESSAY VIII. THE FIGHT

*The New Monthly Magazine*, February 1822, signed 'Phantastes.' First reprinted by Hazlitt's son in *Literary Remains* (1836).

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72. *The fight*, etc. *Cf. Hamlet*, II. 2. 633. The fight between Tom Hickman, the 'Gas-man,' and Bill Neat, took place on December 11, 1821, at Hungerford, Berks. See Pierce Egan's *Boxiana* (1818) for particulars of most of the 'Fancy' heroes referred to by Hazlitt in this essay, which, as 'a very vulgar thing,' nearly escaped publication by the *New Monthly* (C. Redding, *Past Celebrities*, 1866, i. 83-4).  
*Jack Randall's.* *Cf. vol. VIII.*, note to p. 202.  
*'The proverb . . . musty.'* *Cf. Hamlet*, III. 2. 359.  
 Blue ruin. 'Gin of a poor quality' (*N.E.D.*).  
*Joe Toms.* According to Mr. W. C. Hazlitt (see *Memoirs*, II. 76) this was Joseph Parkes (1796-1865), one of Hazlitt's sporting and social acquaintances of whom we hear little. He was one of the young men who surrounded Jeremy Bentham, and at this date was articled to a London solicitor. From 1822 to 1833 he practised in Birmingham, returning to London after Hazlitt's death to establish himself in Westminster as a parliamentary solicitor, and in 1847 became a taxing master in Chancery. In 1824 he married a grand-daughter of Joseph Priestley, and his daughter Bessie Rayner Parkes, by her marriage with a French barrister, M. Louis Belloc, was the mother of a writer who wears at least a part of Hazlitt's mantle in the present day, Mr. Hilaire Belloc.  
 73. 'So carelessly,' etc. *As You Like It*, I. 1. 124.  
*Jack Pigott.* P. G. Patmore. See his *My Friends and Acquaintances*, 1854, III. 41 *et seq.*  
     '*What more felicity*,' etc. Spenser, *Muiopotmos*, st. 27.  
*Tom Belcher's.* Tom Belcher (1783-1854), a younger brother of the better known prize-fighter, James Belcher, kept the 'Castle' tavern in Holborn.  
     '*Well, we meet at Philippi.*' *Cf. Julius Cæsar*, IV. 3. 286.  
 74. 'I follow Fate,' etc.  
     'As if the cares of human life were few,  
     We seek out new,  
     And follow Fate which would too fast pursue.'  
     Dryden, *The Indian Emperor*, Song, Act IV. Scene 3.  
*No mean man.*  
*Tom Turtle.* According to the author's son (see *Literary Remains*, II. 201) this was John Thurtell (1794-1824), the trainer and organiser of sporting events, shortly afterwards to become notorious as the murderer of the solicitor Weare.  
 75. '*Quite chap-fallen.*' *Hamlet*, v. 1. 212.  
*Martin.* Jack Martin, known as 'The Master of the Rolls.'  
*Mr. Richmond.* Bill Richmond, the veteran coloured hero, who had recently taken to teaching boxing. Hazlitt calls him four pages later 'my old master'—from which we must conclude that he had at one time had aspirations after the art.

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75. 'Where good digestion,' etc. *Macbeth*, III. 4. 38.  
*Social chat and native glee.* Cf. 'See Social life and Glee sit down.' Burns,  
*Address to the Unco Guid*, 33.  
 'Follows so,' etc. *Henry V.*, IV. 1. 293.
76. *Is not this life more sweet.* A reminiscence of *As You Like It*, II. 1. 2.  
*Bitter as colocintida.* Cf. *Othello*, I. 3. 355.  
 'More figures,' etc. Cf. *Julius Cæsar*, II. 1. 231.  
*Faith in surgery.* Cf. 'Skill in surgery,' I *Henry IV.*, v. 1. 135.  
*The story of my doctor.* Cf. 'On People With One Idea' (vol. VIII. p. 62).  
 'His dream,' etc. Cf. *Othello*, III. 3. 427.  
 'Seriously inclined.' Cf. *Ibid.*, I. 3. 146.  
*D'un beau jour.* See vol. VIII., note to p. 15.
77. *Matthews.* Charles Matthews, the elder (1776-1835), for whom see *A View of the English Stage*.  
 'A lusty man,' etc. Cf. *Canterbury Tales*, Prologue, 167.  
 'Standing,' etc. *Henry V.*, III. 1. 31.
78. 'He moralized,' etc. Cf. *As You Like It*, II. 1. 44.  
*A firebrand like Bardolph's.* Cf. I *Henry IV.*, II. 2. 355-7.  
 'Loud and furious fun.' Cf. 'The mirth and fun grew fast and furious.' Burns,  
*Tam O'Shanter*, 145.  
*Cribb's beating Jem, etc.* Cribb defeated Jem Belcher twice, in 1807 and 1809. Belcher had lost an eye in 1803 through an accident when playing at rackets.
79. *Gully.* John Gully (1783-1863), afterwards well known in the racing world, had retired from the ring in 1808 after two victories over Bob Gregson.  
*The old maxim.* Cf. Danton's utterance in 1792: 'De l'audace, encore de l'audace, toujours de l'audace, et la France est sauvée.'  
 'Alas!' etc. Cf. 'Alas! Leviathan is not so tamed.' Cowper, *The Task*, II. 322.  
*As Achilles surveyed Hector.* *Iliad*, xxii.  
*The Game Chicken.* Henry Pearce (1777-1809).
80. 'That man was made to mourn.' Cf. vol. IV. p. 53 and note; and see Burns's poem of this title.  
 'Between the acting,' etc. *Julius Cæsar*, II. 1. 63.
81. 'With Atlantean shoulders,' etc. *Paradise Lost*, II. 306.
82. 'Grinned horrible,' etc. *Ibid.*, II. 846.  
 'Like two clouds,' etc. Cf. *Ibid.*, II. 714-716.
83. *Jackson.* Presumably John Jackson (1769-1845), the well-known pugilist (retired 1803), known as 'Gentleman Jackson.'  
 Note. Scroggins. Jack Scroggins, another well-known prizefighter.  
 'In doleful dumps,' etc. *Chevy-Chace*, St. 5c.
84. *Procul este profani.* *Æneid*, VI. 258.  
*Sans intermission by the dial.* Cf. *As You Like It*, II. 1. 32-3.
85. *Ned Turner.* Ned Turner (1791-1826), the conqueror of Scroggins.  
*Broughton and George Stevenson.* Jack Broughton's (1704-1789) fight with George Stevenson, 'The Coachman,' took place, not in 1770, but in 1741.

### ESSAY IX. ON THE CONDUCT OF LIFE, ETC.

Written at Renton in February 1822 (see *Life*, p. 341), and printed by Hazlitt in *Paris Table-Talk* (1825), from which it is here reprinted. The essay was republished by Hazlitt's son in *Literary Remains* (1836) with MS. additions which are reproduced in the notes.

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88. 'The salt of the earth.' S. *Matthew*, v. 13.

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88. 'According to your own dignity,' etc. Cf. *Hamlet*, II. 2. 557.

91. 'Which waste the marrow,' etc. Spenser, of Lecherie :

'That rots the marrow, and consumes the Braine.'

*The Faerie Queene*, I. iv. 26.

*I applied too close to my studies.* Cf. *Life*, pp. 21-2.

'How shall we part,' etc. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, XI. 282-5.

'The study of the Classics,' etc. From *The Round Table* (vol. IV.), pp. 4-5.

92. 'A cure for a narrow and selfish spirit.' Unidentified.

*The collection at Wilton.* See *Sketches of the Picture Galleries*.

94. 'Practique part of life.' *Henry V.*, I. 1. 51.

99. 'We bunt the wind,' etc. See vol. VIII., note to p. 97

'Quit, quit,' etc. Cf. Suckling's Song, 'Why so pale and wan, fond lover?'

1. 12. The following passages, presumably omitted with deliberation by Hazlitt when he printed the essay in *Paris Table-Talk*, are given by his son in the text of *Literary Remains* :

'Your pain is her triumph; the more she feels you in her power, the worse she will treat you: the more you make it appear you deserve her regard, the more will she resent it as an imputation on her first judgment. Study first impressions above all things; for every thing depends on them, in love especially. Women are armed by nature and education with a power of resisting the importunity of men, and they use this power according to their discretion. They enforce it to the utmost rigour of the law against those whom they do not like, and relax their extreme severity proportionably in favour of those that they do like and who in general care as little about them. Hence we see so many desponding lovers and forlorn damsels. Love in women (at least) is either vanity, or interest, or fancy. It is a merely selfish feeling. It has nothing to do (I am sorry to say) with friendship, or esteem, or even pity. I once asked a girl, the pattern of her sex in shape and mind and attractions, whether she did not think Mr. Coleridge had done wrong in making the heroine of his beautiful ballad story of Geneviève take compassion on her hapless lover—

"When on the yellow forest-leaves  
A dying man he lay—" <sup>1</sup>

And whether she believed that any woman ever fell in love through a sense of compassion; and she made answer—"Not if it was against her inclination!" I would take the lady's word for a *thousand pound*, on this point. Pain holds antipathy to pleasure; pity is not akin to love; a dying man has more need of a nurse than of a mistress. There is no forcing liking. It is as little to be fostered by reason and good-nature, as it can be controlled by prudence or propriety. It is a mere blind, headstrong impulse. Least of all flatter yourself that talents or virtue will recommend you to the favour of the sex, in lieu of exterior advantages. Oh! no. Women care nothing about poets, or philosophers, or politicians. They go by a man's looks and manner. Richardson calls them "an eye-judging sex;" and I am sure he knew more about them than I can pretend to do. If you run away with a pedantic notion that they care a pin's-point about your head or your heart, you will repent it too late. Some blue-stocking may have her vanity flattered by your reputation or be edified by the solution of a metaphysical problem or a critical remark or a dissertation on the state of the nation, and fancy that she has a taste for intellect and is an epicure in sentiment. No true woman ever regarded any thing but her lover's

<sup>1</sup> Coleridge, *Love*, St. 16.

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person and address. Gravity will here answer all the same purpose without understanding, gaiety without wit, folly without good-nature, and impudence without any other pretension. The natural and instinctive passion of love is excited by qualities not peculiar to artists, authors, and men of letters. It is not the jest but the laugh that follows, not the sentiment but the glance that accompanies it, that *tells*—in a word, the sense of actual enjoyment that imparts itself to others, and excites mutual understanding and inclination. Authors, on the other hand, feel nothing spontaneously. The common incidents and circumstances of life with which others are taken up, make no alteration in them, nor provoke any of the common expressions of surprise, joy, admiration, anger, or merriment. Nothing stirs their blood or accelerates their juices or tickles their veins. Instead of yielding to the first natural and lively impulses of things, in which they would find sympathy, they screw themselves up to some far-fetched view of the subject in order to be unintelligible. Realities are not good enough for them, till they undergo the process of imagination and reflection. If you offer them your hand to shake, they will hardly take it; for this does not amount to a proposition. If you enter their room suddenly, they testify neither surprise nor satisfaction: no new idea is elicited by it. Yet if you suppose this to be a repulse, you are mistaken. They will enter into your affairs or combat your ideas with all the warmth and vehemence imaginable, as soon as they have a subject started. But their faculty for thinking must be set in motion, before you can put any soul into them. They are intellectual dram-drinkers; and without their necessary stimulus, are torpid, dead, insensible to every thing. They have great life of mind, but none of body. They do not drift with the stream of company or of passing occurrences, but are straining at some hyperbole or striking out a bye-path of their own. Follow them who list. Their minds are a sort of Herculeaneum, full of old, petrified images;—are set in stereotype, and little fitted to the ordinary occasions of life.

What chance, then, can they have with women, who deal only in the pantomime of discourse, in gesticulation and the flippant bye-play of the senses, “nods and winks and wreathed smiles;”<sup>1</sup> and to whom to offer a remark is an impertinence, or a reason an affront? The only way in which I ever knew mental qualities or distinction tell was in the clerical character; and women do certainly incline to this with some sort of favourable regard. Whether it is that the sanctity of pretension piques curiosity, or that the habitual submission of their understandings to their spiritual guides subdues the will, a popular preacher generally has the choice among the *élite* of his female flock. According to Mrs. Inchbald (see her “Simple Story”) there is another reason why religious courtship is not without its charms! But as I do not intend you for the church, do not, in thinking to study yourself into the good graces of the fair, study yourself out of them, millions of miles. Do not place thought as a barrier between you and love: do not abstract yourself into the regions of truth, far from the smile of earthly beauty. Let not the cloud sit upon your brow: let not the canker sink into your heart. Look up, laugh loud, talk big, keep the colour in your cheek and the fire in your eye, adorn your person, maintain your health, your beauty, and your animal spirits, and you will pass for a fine man. But should you let your blood stagnate in some deep metaphysical question, or refine too much in your ideas of the sex, forgetting yourself in a dream of exalted perfection, you will want an eye to cheer you, a hand to guide you, a bosom to lean on, and will stagger into your

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *L'Allegro*, 28.

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grave, old before your time, unloved and unlovely. If you feel that you have not the necessary advantages of person, confidence, and manner, and that it is *up-bill* work with you to gain the ear of beauty, quit the pursuit at once, and seek for other satisfactions and consolations.

A spider, my dear, the meanest creature that crawls or lives, has its mate or fellow: but a scholar has no mate or fellow. For myself, I had courted thought, I had felt pain; and Love turned away his face from me. I have gazed along the silent air for that smile which had lured me to my doom. I no more heard those accents which would have burst upon me, like a voice from heaven. I loathed the light that shone on my disgrace. Hours, days, years, passed away; and only turned false hope to fixed despair. And as my frail bark sails down the stream of time, the God of Love stands on the shore, and as I stretch out my hands to him in vain, claps his wings, and mocks me as I pass!

99. Mr. —. Northcote.

'Paled,' etc. Cf. *Hamlet*, i. 5. 90.

### ESSAY X. ON THE SCOTCH CHARACTER

*The Liberal*, No. 11. (January 1823), unsigned. First reprinted by Waller and Glover.

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100. 'Edina's darling seat.' 'Edina! Scotia's darling seat!' Burns, *Address to Edinburgh*.

'Runs the great mile,' etc.

'While fancy, like the finger of a clock,  
Runs the great circuit, and is still at home.'

Cowper, *The Task*, iv. 118-19.

101. *Lismabago*. In *Humphry Clinker*.

*Lord Erskine*. Lord Erskine was entertained at a banquet in Edinburgh on Feb. 21, 1820. He had not been in Scotland for more than fifty years.

102. *Teres et [atque] rotundus*. Horace, *Satires*, ii. vii. 86.

*Mr. Macvey Napier*. Macvey Napier (1776-1847), editor of the supplement to the 4th, 5th, and 6th editions and of the 7th edition of *The Encyclopædia Britannica*, and Jeffrey's successor (in 1829) as editor of *The Edinburgh Review*. Hazlitt had contributed to the first volume of Supplement, in 1817. See the present editor's *Life*.

103. *The Says, the Bentbams, etc.* Cf. vol. ix. p. 227 and note.

'Damnable iteration in him.' 1 *Henry IV.*, i. 2. 101.

Not like *La Fleur*, etc. See Sterne, *The Sentimental Journey*, The Passport, Paris. Note 1. *Cockney School in Poetry*. See vol. viii. p. 99 and note, and introductory note to *A Reply to Z* (vol. ix.).

'Kernes and Gallowglasses.' *Macbeth*, i. 2. 13.

104. *Sixty Years Since*. The allusion is to the sub-title of *Waverley*.

105. *He called up the ghost of Dr. Hornbook*. See Burns's poem, 'Death and Dr. Hornbook.'

'Sins,' etc. Cf. *Hebrews*, xii. 1.

'At one bound,' etc. 'At one slight bound high overleap'd all bound.' *Paradise Lost*, iv. 181.

A much-talked-of publication. *Blackwood's Magazine*.

'Old Sylvanus at their bead,' etc. This and the following quotations are freely recalled from *The Faerie Queene*, i. vi. 14:

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' And all the way their merry pipes they sound,  
That all the woods with double echo ring.  
*And with their burned feet do weare the ground,*  
Leaping like wanton kids in pleasant Spring.  
So *towards old Sylvanus* they her bring ;  
Who with the noyse awaked commeth out  
To weete the cause, his weake steps governing,  
And aged limbs on *Cypress staddle stout*. . . '

106. 'Pious orgies.' See vol. x., note to p. 14.  
*The John Bull.* See *ante*, p. 41 and note. Theodore Hook was an Englishman.  
*The Beacon.* For Sir Walter Scott's share in this short-lived publication see vol. xi., note to p. 68.  
*Some articles of Sir Walter's undoubted hand.* For a list of Scott's contributions to *Blackwood's* during 1817 and 1818 see an article, 'Sir Walter Scott and Maga,' in the magazine for July 1932.  
'Entire affection,' etc. Cf. *The Faerie Queene*, i. viii. 40.  
*Old Dr. Burney.* Dr. Charles Burney (1726-1814).  
Last line. Add from the magazine: 'N.B. A Defence of the Scotch, shortly.'

## ESSAY XI. MY FIRST ACQUAINTANCE WITH POETS

*The Liberal*, No. III. (April 1823), signed 'W.H.' Reprinted by Hazlitt's son in *Literary Remains* (1836) and *Winterslow* (1850). The germ of the essay appeared in a letter to *The Examiner* of January 12, 1817, reprinted in *Political Essays*. See vol. VII. pp. 128-9 and notes.

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106. *W—m. Wem.*  
'Dreaded name,' etc. *Paradise Lost*, II. 964-5.
107. 'Fluttering,' etc. Cf. *Coriolanus*, v. 6. 116.  
'High-born Hoel's harp,' etc. Gray, *The Bard*, 28.  
*Like a worm by the wayside.* Cf.  
  
    'Wherefore I you pray,  
    Let me not like a worm go by the way.'  
                    Chaucer, *The Clerkes Tale*.  
  
'Bound them,' etc. Pope, *Ode on St. Cecilia's Day*, 90-91.  
*Longings infinite.* Cf. 'With love and longings infinite,' Wordsworth, 'The  
    Affliction of Margaret —,' 63.  
*The fires in the Agamemnon.* See lines 281-316.
108. *It was in January,* etc. This paragraph and the next are from *The Examiner*.  
    See above.
109. '*Bright as [are] the children,*' etc. Thomson, *The Castle of Indolence*, II. xxxiii.  
'*A certain tender bloom,*' etc. 'A certain tender gloom o'erspread his face.'  
    *Ibid.*, I. lvii. Hazlitt refers consistently his own perversion of this quotation.  
*His nose.* Cf. vol. VII., note to p. 117.  
'*Somewhat fat and pury.*' Cf. 'He's fat and scant of breath' (*Hamlet*, v. 2.  
    298), and 'For in the fatness of these pury times,' etc. (*Ibid.*, III. 4. 153).
110. '*No figures,*' etc. *Julius Cæsar*, II. 1. 231.
111. *Tom Wedgwood.* (1771-1805) The second son of the potter. For the  
    association of Coleridge, the Wedgwoods, Macintosh, Godwin, and Richard

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- (‘Conversation’) Sharp at this date and a little later, see T. Wedgwood’s *Life*, by R. B. Litchfield, 1903.
111. *I said, I had once for a few moments.* The probable date of this meeting (which Hazlitt does not mention elsewhere) is September or October, 1796. During the following year, in which Mary Wollstonecraft married Godwin and died after giving birth to Mary Shelley, he was at Wem.
112. *Holcroft.* For Hazlitt’s first acquaintance with whom see vol. III., note to p. x. *A letter from his friend T. Wedgwood.* The letter was written by Josiah, on his own and his brother’s behalf. Its purport is accurately given by Hazlitt. See Mrs. Sandford’s *T. Poole and His Friends* (i. 259). *Deva’s winding vales.* Cf. Southey, *Roderick*, xvi. 58–86. *The shores of old romance.* ‘Sole-sitting by the shores of old romance.’ Wordsworth, ‘Poems on the Naming of Places,’ iv. 38. *A shepherd on the Delectable Mountains.* See *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. *This simile is to be found in Cassandra.* For La Calprenède’s romance *Cassandra*, see ‘Why the Heroes of Romances are Insipid’ (*ante*, p. 248). The simile will be found in Part II., Book 5.
113. ‘*Sounding on his way.*’ Here and in the later-written portrait of Coleridge in *The Spirit of the Age* (vol. xi. p. 30), Hazlitt seems to have had a confused recollection of two passages in Chaucer’s *Prologue*. In *Lectures on the English Poets* (vol. v. p. 13) he says ‘the merchant, as described in Chaucer, went on his way “sounding always the increase of his winning.”’ The scholar is not described as ‘sounding on his way,’ but Chaucer says of him, ‘Souninge in moral vertu was his speche,’ while the merchant, though ‘souninge alway th’ encrees of his winning,’ is not described as going on his way. Wordsworth has a line (*Excursion*, III. 701), ‘Went sounding on a dim and perilous way,’ which may have assisted the quotation to take its present form. *Credat Judaeus Apella!* Horace, *Satires*, i. v. 100. ‘*Thus I confute him, Sir.*’ See Boswell’s *Life* (ed. G. B. Hill), i. 471.
114. *I had written a few remarks . . . a discovery on the same subject.* See *An Essay on the Principles of Human Action*, in vol. I. ‘*Kind and affable,*’ etc.
- ‘Gentle and affable to me hath been  
Thy condescension and shall be honoured ever  
With grateful memory.’
- Paradise Lost*, VIII. 648–50.
- He has somewhere told himself.* See *Biographia Literaria*, chap. x.
115. *That other Vision of Judgment.* Byron’s, just published in *The Liberal*, No. 1. *Mr. Murray, the Secretary of the Bridge-street junta.* Charles Murray, solicitor to the Constitutional Association for Opposing Disloyal and Seditious Principles, whose offices were at 6 New Bridge Street, Blackfriars. Cf. vol. VIII. p. 190 and note.
- I went to Llangollen Vale.* Where he spent his twentieth birthday (April 10, 1798), as narrated in ‘On Going a Journey’ (vol. VIII. p. 186).
- Coleridge’s description of England.* ‘Ode on the Departing Year,’ stanza vii. Hazlitt read it, no doubt, in the second edition of the *Poems* (1797) containing also Charles Lamb’s and Charles Lloyd’s which Coleridge is likely to have given or lent him.
- Tom Jones and the adventure of the muff.* See *Tom Jones*, Book x. chap. v. *et seq.* *At Tewkesbury.* According to the essay ‘On Going a Journey,’ it was at Bridgewater. See vol. VIII. p. 186.



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115. *I once binted to Wordsworth.* On the occasion of his second visit to poets, August–September 1803.
116. *I saw it but the other day.* Hazlitt was at Up-Chaddon, three miles from Taunton, on a visit to John Hunt, in March 1820 (*Life*, p. 295). He may also have been in the neighbourhood more recently, during a visit to his family in Devonshire in the winter of 1822–3 (*ibid.*, p. 354). One or other of these would be the occasion referred to.
- A friend of the poet's who gave him the free use of it.* 'A mistake. I rented the house and had no personal knowledge of the trustees of its owner, then a minor.' Wordsworth's MS. note, added to this passage as quoted in Barron Field's unpublished memoir of the poet (Knight, *Wordsworth*, i. 146). The facts, of course, are that Wordsworth took the house furnished for one year at a rental of £23 free of rates and taxes from the tenant of the St. Albans (Harper, *Wordsworth*, i. 315). Hazlitt was no doubt confusing Alfoxden with Racedown, Wordsworth's previous residence, which was lent to him, rent free and furnished, by the Pinneys of Bristol, in much the spirit indicated (*ibid.*, i. 274 *et seq.*).
- A softness might be perceived, etc.* Cf. vol. xiv., note to p. 121.
- 'The scales that fence.'* Cf. as above.
- 'Hear the loud stag speak.'*
- 'Or if thou list the night-in watch to break,  
A-bed canst hear the loud stag speak.'  
Ben Jonson, 'To Sir Robert Wroth.'
117. *The ballad of Betty Foy.* That is, Wordsworth's 'The Idiot Boy,' published, with the other poems named, in *Lyrical Ballads* in September 1798.
- 'In spite of pride,' etc.* Pope, *An Essay on Man*, i. 293.
- 'While [as] yet,' etc.* Thomson, *The Seasons*, Spring, 18.
- 'Of Providence,' etc.* *Paradise Lost*, ii. 559–60.
118. *Chantry's bust.* Sir Francis Chantrey's bust, now at Coleorton.
- Haydon's head of him.* 'I now put Hazlitt's head into my picture looking at Christ as an investigator [see frontispiece to vol. x.]. It had a good effect. I then put in Keats in the background, and resolved to introduce Wordsworth bowing in reverence and awe. Wordsworth was highly pleased, and before the close of this season (1817) the picture was three parts done.' (Haydon, *Autobiography*, ed Huxley, i. 260.) It was finished and exhibited in 1820, when Hazlitt gave it a friendly notice in the *Edinburgh Review* (vol. xvi. pp. 209–10).
- Castle Spectre.* Originally produced (at Drury Lane) December 14, 1797.
- The story of Peter Bell.* Composed in 1798, published in 1819.
- 'His face,' etc.* Cf. *Macbeth*, i. 5. 63.
119. *A metaphysical argument with Wordsworth.* Cf. *A Reply to Z* (vol. ix. p. 4).
- Tom Poole.* Thomas Poole (1765–1837), for an account of whom see Mrs. Sandford's *Thomas Poole and his Friends*.
- 'Followed in the chase,' etc.* Cf. *Othello*, ii. 3. 369.
- Sir Walter Scott's, etc.* The reference is to the banquet given to George IV. by the Magistrates of Edinburgh, August 24, 1822.
120. *A prose-tale.* That is, *The Wanderings of Cain*. Cf. Coleridge's 'Prefatory Note' to the fragment, in the *Poetical Works* of 1828.
- The Death of Abel.* Solomon Gessner's *Tod Abels* (1758).
121. *'Ribbed sea-sands.'* *The Ancient Mariner*, 227. This was one of the lines for which Coleridge was indebted to Wordsworth.
- Which I have explained at length elsewhere.* In 'Remarks on the Systems of Hartley and Helvetius' (vol. i. pp. 61 *et seq.*).

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122. 'Ob memory!' etc. Cf. vol. XII. p. 223.  
*His friends Lamb and Southey.* Hazlitt's first meeting with Lamb is to be dated, in all probability, at the spring of 1804 (*Life*, p. 82). While he may have seen Southey, in Coleridge's company, on the return of the latter from Germany and the former from Portugal, in London in 1801-2, their first serious acquaintance was during Hazlitt's stay in the Lakes, September-November 1803 (*ibid.*, pp. 77-9).  
 'But there is matter,' etc. Wordsworth, *Hart-leap Well*, 95-6.

### ESSAY XII. OF PERSONS ONE WOULD WISH TO HAVE SEEN

*The New Monthly Magazine*, January 1826, unsigned. Reprinted by Hazlitt's son in *Literary Remains* (1836) and *Winterslow* (1850).

When this essay was printed in *The New Monthly Magazine*, the initials of the speakers were altered, presumably in accordance with Thomas Campbell's usual editorial prudence (cf. *Conversations of Northcote*, vol. XI. p. 353). The identifications of Hazlitt's son, which were for the most part based on the substituted initials of the magazine text, were largely erroneous, and have been followed by subsequent editors. In the present text the initials of the speakers have been restored for the first time to the form in which Hazlitt wrote them, after collation with the original MS. of the essay in the possession of Mr. A. C. Goodyear.

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122. 'Come like shadows,' etc. *Macbeth*, IV. I. 111.  
 L——. Printed as 'B——' in the magazine, and by Hazlitt's son as 'Lamb.' The essay professes to describe a conversation which took place at one of Lamb's 'Wednesdays' at 16 Mitre Court Buildings, where Lamb resided from 1801 to 1809. Hazlitt (p. 124) describes the conversation as having taken place 'twenty years ago.' Cf. the companion essay, 'On the Conversation of Authors,' written six years earlier and reprinted in *The Plain Speaker* (vol. XII. pp. 35 *et seq.*).  
*The defence of Guy Faux.* Published in *The Examiner* in November, 1821. See vol. XX. of the present edition.  
 'Never so sure,' etc. Cf. Pope, *Moral Essays*, II. 51-2.  
 123. A——. Sic in the magazine. This name was not supplied by Hazlitt's son, but was printed by Mr. W. C. Hazlitt (*Memoirs*, I. 273) as 'Ayrton,' which identification is no doubt the correct one. Cf. 'On the Conversation of Authors.'  
 'In his babit,' etc. *Hamlet*, III. 4. 135.  
 124. 'And [or] call up him,' etc. *Il Penseroso*, 109-10.  
*Wished that mankind, etc.* *Religio Medici*, Part II. Sec. ix.  
*The portrait prefixed to the old edition.* The 12mo edition of 1669, no doubt, which Lamb possessed.  
 'Here lies a Sbe-Sun,' etc. *Epithalamion on the Lady Elizabeth and Count Palatine*.  
 126. 'Lisped in numbers,' etc. Pope, *Prologue to the Satires*, 128.  
*His interview with Petrarch, etc.* The editor of *The New Monthly Magazine* adds a footnote: 'Query, did they ever meet?' Chaucer was in Italy in 1372-3, and may have met Petrarch. Cf. *The Canterbury Tales*, The Clerke's Prologue, to which Hazlitt no doubt refers. Chaucer may have met Boccaccio also.  
*A fine portrait of Ariosto.* Cf. *Notes of a Journey* (vol. X. p. 270 and note).  
*Profile of Peter Aretine.* Titian's portrait of Aretine is in the Pitti Gallery.  
 'The mighty dead.' Thomson, *The Seasons*, Winter, 432.

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127. 'A creature,' etc. Cf. *Comus*, 299-301.  
 'That was Arion,' etc. *The Faerie Queene*, iv. xi. 23.  
 Captain B. 'Captain C.' in the magazine. Captain James Burney, promoted Rear-Admiral July 19, 1821.  
 M. C. Sic in the magazine. ?Martin Charles Burney. I do not know why Hazlitt should not give him his more recognisable initials, as he does in 'On the Conversation of Authors.'  
 Miss L——. Mary Lamb, of course, who was ten years old at Goldsmith's death, and whose childhood was spent in the Temple. Printed in the magazine as 'Miss D——,' and by Hazlitt's son as 'Mrs. Reynolds.' See note to p. 134 below.  
 A harsh, croaking voice. Not to be identified. As to Johnson's life during 1745-6 see Boswell's *Life* (ed. G. B. Hill), i. 176 and notes.  
 'With lack-lustre eye.' As *You Like It*, ii. 7. 21.  
 'Despise low joys,' etc. *Imitations of Horace, Epistles*, i. vi. (to Mr. Murray), 60-2.  
 128. 'Conspicuous scene,' etc. *Ibid.*, 50-3.  
 'Why rail they then,' etc. *Epilogue to the Satires*, ii. 138-9.  
 'But why then publish,' etc. *Prologue to the Satires*, 135-46.  
 129. P——. Edward Phillips, for whom see 'On the Conversation of Authors.' Printed as 'E——' in the magazine, and by Hazlitt's son and by Mr. W. C. Hazlitt as 'Erasmus Phillips.'  
 Originally written in eight and twenty volumes. Cf. *The English Comic Writers* (vol. vi. p. 118 and note).  
 To prove that Joseph Andrews was low. Cf. vol. xi. p. 306 and note.  
 'Nigh-sphered in Heaven.' Collins, *Ode, On the Poetical Character*, 66.  
 J. L——. John Lamb. Printed as 'J. F——' in the magazine, and by Hazlitt's son and by Mr. W. C. Hazlitt as 'Barron Field.'  
 The silver-tongued Barry, etc. For these performers see the *Round Table* essay, 'On Actors and Acting' (vol. iv. p. 157 and notes).  
 130. 'A vast species alone.' Cowley, *The Praise of Pindar*, l. 2.  
 A grumbler in a corner. Also not to be identified.  
 H——. Hazlitt himself, of course. Printed as 'G——' in the magazine, and by Hazlitt's son and by Mr. W. C. Hazlitt as 'Godwin.'  
 131. Eugene Aram. Eugene Aram (1704-59), hanged in 1759 for the murder of Daniel Clark several years earlier at Knaresborough.  
 A North-Briton present. Mr. Smith, perhaps, of Lamb's 'Imperfect Sympathies' (*Works*, ed. Lucas, 1912, ii. 69). But one would have expected Lamb to adduce this further instance of his 'most literal understanding.'  
 R——. John Rickman, no doubt, for whom see 'On the Conversation of Authors.' Printed as 'H——' in the magazine, and by Hazlitt's son and Mr. W. C. Hazlitt as 'Hunt.' See note to p. 134, below.  
 Horne Tooke . . . was still living. He died in 1809—which provides further evidence of Hazlitt's deliberation in dating this essay.  
 Dugald Stewart. Philosopher and metaphysician (1753-1828).  
 C——. Coleridge, of course. Printed as 'J——' in the magazine, and hitherto unidentified.  
 132. *The Duchess of Bolton*. Lavinia Fenton (1708-60), the original Polly, married the third Duke of Bolton in 1751.  
 Captain Sentry. See *The Spectator*, No. 2.  
 Giotto, etc. Giotto di Bondone (d. 1337), Giovanni Cimabue (? 1240-? 1302), and Domenico Bigardi (1449-94), known as Ghirlandaio—three of the most famous early Florentine masters.

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132. 'Whose names,' etc. See vol. xvi., note to p. 42.
133. G. D——. George Dyer. Printed as 'G. J——' in the magazine, and hitherto unidentified.
- The Legend of Good Women.* The title of Chaucer's unfinished work.
- The Duchess of Newcastle.* Lamb is never tired of praising her. See, e.g., 'The Two Races of Men' (Elia).
- Mrs. Hutchinson.* Lucy Hutchinson (b. 1620). Her Life of her husband, Colonel Hutchinson, was first published in 1806.
- One in the room, etc.* Mary Lamb, of course, to whom this is one of the most graceful of Hazlitt's several expressions of constant regard.
- Ninon de l'Enclos.* Ninon de Lenclos (1616–1706), the famous beauty.
- The print of that subject.* Cf. vol. vi. p. 29 and vol. viii. p. 111. Mr. George Sampson has identified the original of this print as painted by Nicolas-André Monsiau and exhibited at the Salon of 1802.
- A shrill, querulous voice.* Hazlitt's humorous description of his own voice, perhaps, since the MS. reads, 'I said, "There is one person I would rather see,"' etc.
- 'Your most exquisite reason.' Cf. *Twelfth Night*, II. 3. 155.
- Last line. 'There is that fellow H—— will make an Essay of it' in the MS.
134. 'Oh! ever right,' etc. Cf. *Coriolanus*, II. 1. 209.
- 'There is only one other person,' etc. It should be noted that *Literary Remains and Winterslow* (followed by Mr. W. C. Hazlitt in the *Memoirs* and in the *Bohn Sketches and Essays*) wrongly attribute this speech to Lamb. The magazine clearly gives it to 'H——,' as Messrs. Waller and Glover pointed out. The MS. is equally clear in giving it to 'R——,' whom we have identified as John Rickman. Leigh Hunt was not, of course, by years a Mitre-Courtier, and he may now make his formal disappearance from an essay in which he has only been made to figure by a misapprehension.
- A lady present.* 'Mrs. R——s' in the MS., i.e. Mrs. Reynolds, for whom see 'On the Conversation of Authors' and note to p. 127, above.
- The same event.* Napoleon's return from Elba, and the opening of the Hundred Days. Cf. *The Round Table* preface (vol. iv.), and *The Life of Napoleon* (vol. xv. p. 259).

## ESSAY XIII. ENGLISH STUDENTS AT ROME

*The New Monthly Magazine*, October 1827, unsigned. First reprinted by Hazlitt's son in *Criticisms on Art* (1843–4).

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136. 'The vast, the unbounded.' Cf. *Paradise Lost*, x. 471.
138. 'Petrific mace.' *Ibid.*, x. 294.
- The Heliodorus.* Cf. *Notes of a Journey* (vol. x. p. 240).
139. *When I was young, etc.* Cf. 'On the Pleasure of Painting' (vol. viii.).
- 'Pan is god,' etc. Lyly, *Midas*, Act IV. Scene 1.
- 'The colouring of Titian,' etc. *Tristram Shandy*, Book III. chap. 12.
140. 'The big endeavour,' etc. Cowper, *The Task*, v. 901.
- The mighty dead.* Unacknowledged from Thomson, *The Seasons*, Winter, 432.
- Bestrides the place like a Colossus.* Cf. *Julius Cæsar*, I. 2. 136.
141. *Hobbes said well.* Leviathan, Part IV., *Of the Kingdom of Darknesse*, chap. 47.
- An old woman.* The Pope, presumably.
- That luckless question of cicisbeism.* Cf. *Notes of a Journey* (vol. x. p. 250 *et seq.*).

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142. *Vox faucibus bæsit.* Virgil, *Æneid*, II. 774.  
*Sedet infelix Theseus.* *Ibid.*, VI. 617.  
*Bestow . . . 'bis tediousness.'* Cf. *Much Ado About Nothing*, III. 5. 25-6.  
*The Tower of St. Angelo.* Cf. vol. XII. p. 177 and note.  
 143. 'Tearing [wipe away] from his memory,' etc. *Hamlet*, I. 5. 98.  
 'Her [my] commandment all alone,' etc. *Ibid.*, I. 5. 102.

### ESSAY XIV. THE VATICAN

*The New Monthly Magazine*, November 1827, unsigned. First reprinted by Hazlitt's son in *Literary Remains* (1836).

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144. L. . . . H. The 'H.' of this dialogue is, of course, Hazlitt; the 'L.', whoever else he may be, is obviously not Landor, as suggested by Mr. W. C. Hazlitt. (*Essays on the Fine Arts*.) The dialogue was written no doubt, like the previous paper, shortly after Hazlitt's return from his Italian tour.  
 'With hideous ruin,' etc. *Paradise Lost*, I. 46.  
 145. *Divinæ particula* [particulam] *auræ.* Horace, *Satires*, II. 2.  
 'The rapt soul,' etc. *Il Penseroso*, 40.  
 'Seer blest.' *Paradise Lost*, XII. 553.  
 'As a book,' etc. *Macbeth*, I. 5. 63.  
 'Neither the cloud by day,' etc. *Exodus*, XIII. 21.  
 147. 'His bodies thought.'

' ———so distinctly wrought

That one might almost say, her body thought.'

John Donne: *An Anatomy of the World*, Second Anniversary, 245-6.

*The allegorical figures of Night and Morn.* See *Notes of a Journey* (vol. x. p. 240).

'A fiery soul,' etc. Dryden, *Absalom and Achitophel*, I. 156.

148. Note. See *Notes of a Journey* (vol. x. p. 220).

149. *The Miracle of Bolsano.* See *ibid.*, p. 240.

*I had seen most of them in the Louvre.* Cf. 'On the Pleasure of Painting' (vol. VIII. p. 15).

*The Crowning of the Virgin.* See *Notes of a Journey* (vol. x. pp. 240, 273).

150. 'Hope elevates,' etc. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, IX. 633.

*The Leo X.* See *Notes of a Journey* (vol. x. p. 226).

'On his front,' etc. *Paradise Lost*, II. 302.

*That little portrait in a cap.* The 'Head of a Student.' Cf. vol. x. p. 112.

'Scattered like stray-gifts,' etc. Wordsworth, *Stray Pleasures*.

'Stately beight though bare.' Cf. *Paradise Lost*, I. 723:

'The ascending pile

Stood fixed her stately highth.'

151. *Some tapestry copies of the Cartoons.* These are, of course, the original tapestries, prepared from Raphael's designs at the order of Pope Leo X for the Sistine Chapel. Cf. vol. x., note to p. 43.

*A tablet . . . in St. Peter's.* Cf. *Notes of a Journey* (vol. x. p. 233 and note).

*Cosmo Comyne Bradwardine.* *Waverley*, vol. II. chap. 28.

*Fergus MacIvor.* *Ibid.*, vol. II. chap. 40.

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## ESSAY XV. MERRY ENGLAND

*The New Monthly Magazine*, December 1825, unsigned. First reprinted by Hazlitt's son in *Sketches and Essays* (1839).

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152. 'The pleasure of going,' etc. Unidentified.  
 'I have been merry,' etc. Cf. 2 *Henry IV.*, v. 3. 42.  
 'He chirped over his cups.' This quotation appears to be from Rabelais. See vol. iv. p. 52 and note.  
 'There were pippins,' etc. This announcement is Sir Hugh Evans's, in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, i. 2. 13: it is Shallow, in the scene Hazlitt is quoting, who says 'We will eat a last year's pippin of my own grafting' (2 *Henry IV.*, v. 3. 2).  
 'Continents,' etc. Hobbes, *Human Nature* (*Works*, ed. Molesworth, iv. 50).  
 153. 'They . . . amused themselves,' etc. See vol. i., note to p. 100.  
 'Eat, drink,' etc. S. Luke, xii. 19.  
 'Hair-breadth 'scapes.' *Otello*, i. 3. 136.  
 154. *Chimney-sweepers* . . . *Jack-o'-the-green*. Cf. vol. x., note to p. 213.  
 'Long Robinson.' R. Robinson, who figures in the Lord's records, 1796-1810.  
*Old Lord's cricket-ground*. Hazlitt refers to the original 'Lord's,' established about 1782 by Thomas Lord, on the site now occupied by Dorset Square, where the game continued to be played till 1810. The present Lord's dates from 1814.  
 Note. 'The gentle and free passage of arms at Asbby.' Described by Scott in *Ivanhoe*, chap. viii.  
 155. 'A cry more tuneable,' etc. Cf. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, iv. 1. 129.  
 'Brothers of the angle.' *The Compleat Angler*, Part i. chap. i.  
*Assigned by Dr. Johnson*. Cf. vol. xii. p. 161.  
 156. 'Book of Sports.' James I.'s declaration (1618) authorising certain forms of recreation after divine service on Sundays. The declaration was republished by Charles I. in 1633.  
 'And e'en on Sunday,' etc. Cf. Burns, *Tam O'Shanter*, 27-8.  
 157. *Those who have seen it at Florence*. Cf. *Notes of a Journey* (vol. x. pp. 212-13).  
*Gilray's shop-window*. Miss Humphrey's shop, 29 St. James's Street, where James Gilray (1757-1815), the caricaturist, spent the last years of his life, and where his works were on view. *Sketches and Essays* prints 'Forc's shop-window.'  
 158. *Lord Byron was in the habit of railing*. Cf. Medwin, *Conversations*, 1824, p. 106.  
 159. 'Merry and wise.' "'Tis good to be merry and wise,' a frequently quoted old proverb.  
 'By [at] every little breath,' etc. *The Faerie Queene*, i. vii. 32.  
 'They own surprises them.' Unidentified.  
 160. *The Dispensary in Warwick-lane*. The New Finsbury Dispensary, West Smithfield, opened in 1786.  
*Lubin Log*. In James Kenney's *Love, Law and Physic*, produced 1812.  
 'Made life's business like a summer dream.' Unidentified.  
*Nell, etc.* Nell in *The Devil to Pay*; Little Pickle in *The Spoil'd Child*, a part created by Mrs. Jordan, March 22, 1790; Lingo in *The Agreeable Surprise*; Nipperkin in *Sprigs of Laurel*, a part created by Munden, May 11, 1793; old Dornon in *The Road to Ruin*; Ranger in *The Suspicious Husband*; the Copper Captain in *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*, one of Lewis's great parts;

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- Filch in *The Beggar's Opera*; Hodge in *Love in a Village*; Flora in *The Wonder*; Lady Grace in *The Provoked Husband*.  
 160. 'Throwing a gaudy shadow upon life.' Unidentified.  
 'Tut! [Prithee, think] there's livers,' etc. Cf. *Cymbeline*, III. 4. 143.  
 'What's our Britain,' etc. Cf. *ibid.* III. 4. 140-42.  
 As I write this,' etc. For Hazlitt's stay at Vevey, from June to September 1825, at the conclusion of his Italian tour, see *Notes of a Journey* (vol. x. pp. 281 et seq.).  
 'And gaudy butterflies,' etc. Cf. Gay, *The Beggar's Opera*, Act I. Scene 1.  
 162. 'All appliances,' etc. 2 *Henry IV.*, III. 1. 29.

### ESSAY XVI. ON THE CONVERSATION OF LORDS

*The New Monthly Magazine*, April 1826, unsigned. First reprinted by Hazlitt's son in *Sketches and Essays* (1839).

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162. 'An infinite deal of nothing.' *The Merchant of Venice*, I. 1. 114.  
 163. One small room at Parma. Cf. *Notes of a Journey* (vol. x. pp. 203-4).  
 'The wish,' etc. 2 *Henry IV.*, IV. 5. 93.  
 He carried this weakness so far. Leigh Hunt's information, in Florence, no doubt.  
 164. *The O. P. row.* See vol. v. p. 357 and note.  
 165. 'Bestow his tediousness.' Cf. *Much Ado About Nothing*, III. 5. 25-6.  
 'Treatise on Horsemanship.' The Duke of Newcastle (1592-1676), husband of Lamb's favourite (see ante, note to p. 133), wrote two works on horsemanship, (i) *La Methode et Invention Nouvelle de dresser les Chevaux* (Antwerp, 1657), and (ii) *A New Method and Extraordinary Invention to Dress Horses*, etc. (1667). Hazlitt probably refers to the first, which was published in English with 43 plates in vol. 1. of *A General System of Horsemanship* (1743).  
*Ride the Great Horse.* I.e. 'the high horse.' Hazlitt's form of the phrase is the more usual before 1800 (*N.E.D.*).  
*I have occasionally in my life bought a few prints.* E.g. at Winterslow in 1809-11, following his first marriage. Cf. *Life*, pp. 125-7.  
 166. 'A question,' etc. 1 *Henry IV.*, II. 4. 451.  
 'The act and practice part,' etc. *Henry V.*, I. 1. 51 (Pope's text).  
 'The dregs of earth.' 'And stoops from Angels to the Dregs of Earth.' Pope, 'Epilogue to the Satires,' I. 142.  
 'The feast of reason,' etc. Pope, *Imitations of Horace*, Sat. 1. 128.  
 167. 'Catch glimpses,' etc. Cf. Wordsworth's sonnet 'The world is too much with us,' etc.  
 'Face to face,' etc. Cf. 1 *Corinthians*, xiii. 12.  
 'With jealous leer malign.' *Paradise Lost*, IV. 503.  
 'Best can feel them,' etc. 'He best can paint them who shall feel them most.' Pope, *Eloisa to Abelard*, 366.  
 168. *The Roxburgh Club.* Founded in 1812 to celebrate the sale of the third Duke of Roxburgh's great library.  
 'With sparkling eyes,' etc. Cf. Watts, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, Book II. Hymn 65.  
 'Pure in the last recesses,' etc. Cf. Dryden, *Translations from Persius*, Sat. II. 133.  
 169. 'Or write,' etc. Cf. Pope, *Epilogue to the Satires*, I. 137.  
 Lord Byron used to boast. ?Leigh Hunt's information, again.

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169. 'Held on their way,' etc.  
     'That unassailable holds on his rank,  
     Unslacked of motion.' *Julius Cæsar*, III. i. 70 (Pope's text).
170. 'The labour,' etc. *Macbeth*, II. 3. 55.  
     'For a consideration.' The 'favourite expression' of the usurer Trapbois in  
     *The Fortunes of Nigel* (Chap. 22).  
     'From every work,' etc. *The Faerie Queen*, I. iv. 20.  
     *Otium cum dignitate*. Cicero, *Pro P. Sestio*, c. 45.
171. *On my excusing myself to N—*. Northcote. Cf. vol. XII. p. 111 and note.  
     *A celebrated critic*. Jeffrey, perhaps.  
     *This last personage*. Hazlitt is defining his own conception of the literary  
     vocation. Cf. *ante*, p. 318.  
     'To take progression from them.' Hazlitt in this sentence is paraphrasing Bacon :  
     'Antiquity deserveth that reverence, that men should make a stand there-  
     upon and discover what is the best way; but when the discovery is well taken,  
     then to make progression.' *Advancement of Learning*, Book I. chap. v. § i.  
     Cf. vol. XIII. p. 80.
172. 'That there are powers,' etc. Wordsworth, *Expostulation and Reply*, 21-4.
173. *Astley's*. Astley's Royal Amphitheatre, in Westminster Bridge Road, founded  
     as a riding-school in 1770, and famous for its equestrian entertainments for  
     nearly a century.  
     *Exeter 'Change*. See vol. x., note to p. 160.  
     Note. *The St. Peter Martyr*. Cf. vol. x. pp. 271-2.
174. 'Runs the great circle,' etc. See *ante*, p. 100 and note.  
     'A man's mind,' etc. Cf. *Antony and Cleopatra*, III. 13. 32.  
     *Lord Bolingbroke, whom Pope idolized*. Cf. Hazlitt's *Edinburgh Review* notice of  
     Spence's *Anecdotes* in vol. xvi.  
     *I never knew till the other day*. From conversation in the Florence circle,  
     perhaps.  
     *The Letter to Sir William Wyndham*. Published among his posthumous works  
     in 1753.
175. *Lord Bolingbroke bad, it seems, etc.* This account seems to have no foundation  
     in fact, though Chatham's admiration of Bolingbroke's eloquence is well  
     known.  
     'As if a man,' etc. *Coriolanus*, v. 3. Cf. vol. I. p. 159.  
     *I have it from the same authority*. ? Landon or Lord Dillon.  
     *Lord Chatham*. See Hazlitt's 'Character' of him in vol. VII.

### ESSAY XVII. ON THE WANT OF MONEY

*The Monthly Magazine*, January 1827, unsigned. First reprinted by Hazlitt's son  
in *Literary Remains* (1836).

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176. *Old Fuller, or some worthy of that age*. The quotation is from Sir Thomas  
     Browne. Cf. vol. XII. p. 267.
177. *That Mr. Moore would write his Life*. Moore's *Life of Sheridan* appeared in  
     1825.  
     Note. *Taylor, of the Opera House*. W. Taylor, lessee of the King's Theatre,  
     Haymarket, where the Drury Lane Company was transferred, during re-  
     building, 1790-93.  
     'Such gain,' etc. *Cymbeline*, III. 3. 25-6.



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177. *Barber and Nunn's*. Nunn and Barber, lacemen, 5 York-street, Covent Garden. *Mr. Mathews the player*. See *ante*, p. 77 and note. *Sberidan's reply to the watchman*. Cf. *The Spirit of the Age* (vol. xi. p. 150, footnote).
178. 'Blights the tender blossom,' etc. Unidentified.
179. 'Screw one's courage,' etc. Cf. *Macbeth*, i. 7. 60.  
'As kind,' etc. Dryden, *The Hind and the Panther*, i. 271.
180. *I once lived on coffee, etc.* Probably this reminiscence belongs to the year 1803, when, following his return from the Louvre, he essayed the career of a portrait-painter with headquarters among his father's friends in Manchester. Cf. *Life*, p. 77.  
'Of formal cut.' *As You Like It*, ii. 7. 155.  
*The fair Aurora*. *Gil Blas*, Livre iv.  
*Monsieur de Very*. See vol. x., note to p. 166.  
*Apicius*. Marcus Gaius Apicius, the notorious Roman epicure, referred to by Pliny, x. 48.  
*Amelia's basbed mutton*. *Amelia*, Book x. chap. v.  
*I recollect a ludicrous instance*. Cf. vol. vii. p. 220, footnote.
181. 'And ever,' etc. *L'Allegro*, 135-6.  
'We called,' etc. Cf. *Colonel Jack*, chap. i.  
'The Colonel,' etc. *Ibid*.  
*The City Madam*. See Massinger's *The City Madam*, Act iii. Scene 3.  
'Spanish Rogue.' Mateo Aleman's *Guzman de Alfarache* (1599). Cf. vol. vi. p. 111.  
*Mr. Lamb has referred*. See Lamb's *Specimens*, note to Rowley's *A New Wonder* (*Works*, ed. Lucas, 1912, i. 54).  
Note. 'His daughter and his ducats.' *The Merchant of Venice*, ii. 8. 24.
182. 'By their so potent art.' Cf. *The Tempest*, v. 1. 50.
183. 'We know,' etc. *Hamlet*, iv. 5. 42.  
'Within that lowest deep,' etc. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, iv. 76-7.
184. *Smollett's fine gentleman and lady in gaol*.  
*It is justly remarked by the poet*. Cf. vol. ix. p. 220.
185. *I never knew but one man, etc.* The subject of this passage has been variously identified; there can be no doubt, however, that it is Richard ('Conversation') Sharp (1759-1835) who is alluded to, whose hospitality at Fredley Farm, Mickleham, near Boxhill, Hazlitt enjoyed in 1806-8, at the outset of his career of authorship. See the present editor's *Life* (edition 1928, appendix, pp. 436-8).  
*I have been told by those, who shared of the same bounty*. This allusion is probably to Coleridge. Cf. as above.  
'With wine,' etc. Cf. Milton's Sonnet, 'Lawrence, of virtuous father,' etc.
186. *The Duchess of —*. I do not find this anecdote in the biographies.  
*To get a situation . . . as newspaper reporter*. To which expedient Hazlitt was himself driven in 1812, on his failure to live by portrait-painting or as a writer on metaphysics. We cannot regret the circumstance, as it introduced him to journalism and to the discovery of his true *métier*.
187. *Echard's book*. See vol. vi., note to p. 107.  
*When I used to meet them walking out . . . at Somers' Town*. This was a new suburb of London, begun in 1786 and named after the ground landlord, Lord Somers. The boom which led to the construction of this suburb and the adjacent Camden Town was followed by a slump which was partially checked by the influx of French refugees, and in 1802 Somers' Town contained some thousand French inhabitants. See George, *London Life in the Eighteenth*

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- Century*, 1925, pp. 79-80. We learn from the *Liber Amoris* (vol. ix. p. 157) that Hazlitt 'once lived' in 'a house in King Street,' Somers' Town. The period would probably be about 1802 or a little later, between his residence with his brother at Great Russell Street and his first occupation of rooms in Southampton Buildings.
188. 'Pure in the last recesses of the mind.' Dryden, *The Second Satire of Persius*, 133. 'Baser matter.' *Hamlet*, I. 5. 104.  
*Mr. Thomas Wedgewood*. See ante, p. 111 and note.  
 'We can bold,' etc. *Richard II.*, I. 3. 294.

### ESSAY XVIII. ON THE FEELING OF IMMORTALITY IN YOUTH

*The Monthly Magazine*, March 1827, unsigned. Printed by Hazlitt's son from an alternative text, presumably that of the MS. (see 'Travelling Abroad,' below) in *Literary Remains* (1836) and *Winterslow* (1850).

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189. 'Life is a pure flame,' etc. Sir T. Browne, *Hydriotaphia*, chap. v.  
*My brother's*. John Hazlitt (1767-1837), for whose self-portrait see frontispiece to vol. xviii.
190. 'The vast,' etc. Cf. 'The wide, the unbounded prospect, lies before me.'  
 Addison, *Cato*, Act v. Scene 1.  
 'Bear a charmed life.' *Macbeth*, v. 8. 12.  
 'Bidding,' etc. Collins's Ode, *The Passions*, 32.  
 'This sensible,' etc. *Measure for Measure*, III. 1. 120.  
 191. 'Wine of life,' etc. Cf. *Macbeth*, II. 3. 100.  
 'As in a glass darkly.' Cf. I *Corinthians*, xiii. 12.  
 'So am not I.' Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*, vol. v. chap. vii.  
 Note. Hazlitt is here quoting the opening lines of his early friend Joseph Fawcett's poem, which was published in 1795. See vol. III., note to p. 171.
192. 'The feast of reason,' etc. Pope, *Imitations of Horace*, Sat. 1. 128.  
 1. 11. 'We were invited' substituted for 'they were invited' in magazine text.  
 'Brave sublunary things.' Cf. 'Those brave translunary things.' Michael Drayton, *To Henry Reynolds*.  
*Sbook to air*. Cf. *Troilus and Cressida*, III. 3. 225.  
 'The stockdove,' etc. Cf. Thomson, *The Castle of Indolence*, I. St. 4.  
 Note. 'She would much rather be,' etc. This quotation is elusive.  
 'Had it not been,' etc. *Works*, II. 254.  
*She says of Richardson*. See *ibid.*, II. 285 *et seq.* and 222.  
*Monstrum ingens biforme*. Cf. *Æneid*, III. 658.  
 'His spirits,' etc. *Works*, II. 283.
195. *In the Cathedral at Peterborough*. Where his mother's family, the Loftuses, resided.  
 'The purple light of love.' Gray, *The Progress of Poetry*, 41.  
 'The Raphael grace,' etc. Cf. 'Match Raphael's grace with thy loved Guido's air.' Pope, *Moral Essays*, VIII. 36.  
 'Gain new vigour,' etc. Cowper, *Charity*, 104.
196. 'Beguile,' etc. Cf. 'Lose and neglect the creeping hours of time,' *As You Like It*, II. 7. 112; and 'Beguile the lazy time,' *Midsummer Night's Dream*, v. 1. 40.  
 Note. Cf. 'On the Old Age of Artists' in vol. XII.
197. 'Total eclipse.' Cf. *Samson Agonistes*, 79.  
 'The Robbers.' Cf. vol. VI. p. 362.  
 'From the dungeon,' etc. Coleridge, Sonnet, 'To the Author of *The Robbers*.'

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197. *Don Carlos*. Schiller's play (1787).  
*My miniature-picture when a child*. See frontispiece to vol. viii.  
*'That time is past,' etc.* Cf. Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey*, 83-5.  
*Since the future was barred to my progress*. This allusion is to the hostility his work had incurred, at the hands of the *Quarterly*, of *Blackwood's* and, later, of *John Bull*; and may be taken as giving his own feeling regarding the setting of the last ten years of his life.
198. *'Even from the tomb,' etc.* Gray's *Elegy*, 91-2.  
*'All the life,' etc.* Cf. 'For a' the life of life is dead.' Burns, *Lament for James, Earl of Glencairn*, St. 6.  
*'From the last dregs,' etc.* Cf. Dryden, *Aurengzebe*, Act iv. Scene 1.  
*We do not in the regular course of nature die all at once*. This idea is developed in the concluding paragraph of the essay 'On the Fear of Death,' printed by his son. See vol. viii. p. 374.
199. *'Treason [malice] domestic,' etc.* Cf. *Macbeth*, iii. 2. 25.  
*'Reverbs its own hollowness.'* Cf. *King Lear*, i. 1. 156.

### ESSAY XIX. ON READING NEW BOOKS

*The Monthly Magazine*, July 1827, signed 'W.H.' Reprinted by Hazlitt's son (with omissions) in *Sketches and Essays* (1839). Mr. W. C. Hazlitt's statement, probably on the evidence of the MS., that this essay was written in May 1825, in Florence, appears to be correct. See *Memoirs*, 1867, ii. 154, and note to p. 209 below.

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200. *'And what of this new book,' etc.* *Tristram Shandy*, Book III. chap. xii.  
 Note. See vol. vi., note to p. 22.
201. *'Has just come,' etc.* Cf. *Richard III.*, i. 1. 20-1.
202. *Mail-Coach copies*. See vol. xii., note to p. 220.
203. *A Manuscript of Cicero's*. The reference is probably to Cardinal Angelo Mai's (1782-1854) discoveries.  
*A Noble Lord*. The Marquis of Blandford, who bought Valdarfer's edition of Boccaccio for £2260 at the Roxburgh sale in 1812.  
*Mr. Thomas Taylor*. Thomas Taylor (1758-1835), the Platonist, Hazlitt's meeting with whom is recorded in the footnote. Cf. vol. iii. p. 201. The 'old Duke of Norfolk' (Bernard Edward, 12th Duke, 1765-1842) was his patron, and locked up nearly the whole of Taylor's edition of *Plato* (5 vols., 1804) in his library.  
 Note. *Mr. G. D.'s chambers*. See *ante*, p. 132. George Dyer lived in Clifford's Inn from 1794-5. His *History of the University and Colleges of Cambridge*, etc. was published in 2 vols. in 1814. In reference to the number of corrections in this work, Lamb spoke of Dyer as 'Cancellarius Magnus.'  
*Another friend of mine, etc.* Leigh Hunt. See his essay 'Jack Abbot's Breakfast' reprinted in *Men, Women, and Books* (1847). Procter tells a version of the story concerning another visitor in his *Autobiographical Fragment* (pp. 77-9).
204. *An enterprising bookseller*. Henry Colburn, probably.  
*Ireland's celebrated Shakspeare forgery*. The main forgery, *Vortigern*, was produced at Drury Lane on April 2, 1796. Cf. vol. xi. p. 208 and note.
205. *A late number of a contemporary publication*. I have not identified this.  
*'Proud as voben,' etc.* Cf. *Troilus and Cressida*, i. 3. 380.
206. *'Like sunken wreck,' etc.* Cf. *Henry V.*, i. 2. 165.
207. *'Full of wise saws,' etc.* Cf. *As You Like It*, ii. 7. 156.

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207. 'An insolent piece of paper.' 'A piece of arrogant paper.' Massinger, *A New Way to pay Old Debts*, Act iv. Scene 3.  
 'Somewhat [Something] musty.' *Hamlet*, III. 2. 359.  
*Longinus complains, etc.* See Longinus, *On the Sublime*, ix.  
*As Fuseli expresses it.* See his *Lectures on Painting*, 1820, p. 124.
208. *Irving's Orations.* See vol. xi. p. 44 and note.  
*The Jew's letters.* Dr. Philip le Fanu published in 1777 a translation of the Abbé Guenté's *Lettres de certaines Juives à M. Voltaire*.  
*The Charter.* Granted by Louis XVIII in 1814, on the restoration of the Bourbons, and rendered a dead-letter by him and his successor, Charles x. At the period of Hazlitt's recent visit to Paris the struggle was being waged particularly over the censorship of the press. Five years later Charles's 'ordinances' produced the Revolution of the Three Days and the fall of the Bourbons. The first act of Louis Philippe was the ratification of the Charter. Cf. 'On Personal Politics,' in vol. xix.  
*The Princess of Cleves.* By Madame de La Fayette (1678). Cf. *ante*, p. 248.  
*Hooted off the stage.* *The Times* of Dec. 10, 1817, quotes from New York papers dated Oct. 27 an account of the refusal of a New York audience to hear *The Beggar's Opera*.  
*Flocci-nauci, etc.* Shenstone, Letter xxi. 1741 (*Works*, 1791, III. 49).  
 'Flames in the forehead,' etc. *Lycidas*, 171.
209. *Mr. Godwin composed an Essay.* See vol. xvi., note to p. 400.  
 Note. *A certain poet.* We do not know Hazlitt's informant. Cf., however, a letter from Wordsworth to John Scott, of April 16, 1816, on Byron's departure from England: 'Let me only say one word upon Lord Byron. The man is insane; and will probably end his career in a mad-house. The verses on his private affairs excite in me less indignation than pity. . . . The true way of dealing with these men is to shew that they want genuine power; that talents they have, but that these talents are of a mean order; and that their productions have no solid basis to rest upon.' (Knight, *Wordsworth*, II. 267.)  
*It has lasted above a year.* Byron died on April 19, 1824, and it would, therefore, seem probable that this essay was written in the following summer. See introductory note, above.
210. 'By Heavens,' etc. Wordsworth Sonnet, 'The world is too much with us.'

## ESSAY XX. ON MEANS AND ENDS

*The Monthly Magazine*, September 1827, signed 'W.H.' Reprinted by Hazlitt's son (with omissions and variations) in *Literary Remains* (1836) and *Winterslow* (1850).

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212. 'We work by wit,' etc. *Othello*, II. 3. 378.  
 213. 'Leaps at once,' etc. Cowper, *The Task*, v. 686.  
 'From Indus,' etc. Pope, *Eloisa to Abeldar*, 58.  
 214. 'A wilful man,' etc. Proverbial.  
*Quam nihil, etc.* Cf. vol. XII. p. 294.  
*The late Mr. Barry.* On whom see Hazlitt's *Encyclopædia Britannica* article in a later volume. The present reference is to his 'General Observations on Titian's Colouring' (*Works*, II. 51 *et seq.*).  
 215. *Hinc illas lacrymæ.* Horace, *Epistles*, I. xix. 41.  
 I. 17. 'Things' substituted for 'this' in magazine text.

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216. 'Constrained by mastery.' Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, The Franklin's Tale, 36; Wordsworth quotes the line in *The Excursion*, vi. 162-5.
217. *Some twenty years ago*. In the winter of 1802-3, when Hazlitt was studying in the Louvre.  
'Makes a sunshine,' etc. *The Faerie Queene*, i. iii. 4.  
*Another young man*. Cf. *Notes of a Journey* (vol. x. p. 130).  
*They forgot that they had ever been called the great nation*. Cf. *Life of Napoleon* (vol. xv. p. 150).
218. *David's and Girodet's pictures*. Jacques Louis David (1748-1825) and Anne Louis Girodet (1767-1824).  
'For one unkind and cruel fair,' etc. Unidentified.  
'Potations, pottle deep.' *Othello*, ii. 3. 56.
219. *I lately tried to make a copy*. Of Titian's 'Man in Black,' as we learn on the next page. Cf. introductory note to *The Life of Napoleon*, in vol. xiii.; and see also vol. x., note to p. 112.
220. 'In a phantasma,' etc. *Julius Cæsar*, ii. 1. 65.  
'Courage,' etc. *Paradise Lost*, i. 108.
221. 'His thoughts,' etc. Cf. 'The hot Hell that always in him burns.' *Ibid.*, ix. 467.  
*An English editor (of virulent memory)*. Hazlitt's quondam brother-in-law, John Stoddart. Cf. *Political Essays*.  
Note. Dr. Johnson has observed. Cf. *The Rambler*, No. 1.  
'The lunatic,' etc. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, v. 1. 7.
222. 'Set but a Scotsman,' etc. Cf. Burns, *The Author's Earnest Cry and Prayer*, Postscript, St. 4.  
*The Greek cause makes no progress*. Cf. vol. xiv., note to p. 344.  
*When an English lady of quality*. I do not follow this allusion.  
'And it alone,' etc. Cf. *Twelfth Night*, i. 1. 15.
223. *It has been well said*. By Lamb in his essay 'On the Genius and Character of Hogarth.'  
*Barry . . . the Medusa's head*. See vol. x., note to p. 225.  
*Luther's comparison of Reason*. Cf. vol. xiii. p. 192 and note.  
'The darlings of his precious eye.' Cf. 'Make it a darling like your precious eye.' *Othello*, iii. 4. 66.
224. 'The jovial thigh,' etc. 'His martial thigh; the brawns of Hercules; but his jovial face. . . .' *Cymbeline*, iv. 2. 310-11.
225. 'They are careful,' etc. Cf. S. Luke, x. 41-2.
226. 'And with their darkness,' etc. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, i. 391.  
'They also serve,' etc. Adapted from Milton's Sonnet, No. xx., 'When I consider how my light is spent,' etc.  
Note. Zaffani. Johann Zoffany, or Zaufelly (1733-1810).  
*Reynolds's Speculation*. A comedy by Frederick Reynolds, produced in 1795. George III. was much amused by it. See *Life of Reynolds*, ii. 208-10.

### ESSAY XXI. ON DISAGREEABLE PEOPLE

*The Monthly Magazine*, August 1827, signed 'H.H.' First reprinted by Hazlitt's son in *Sketches and Essays* (1839).

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228. 'Discourse of reason,' etc. A composite quotation. 'Discourse of reason' is *Hamlet*, i. 2. 150, and 'Large discourse, looking before and after,' *ibid.*, iv. 4. 36-7.

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228. Casting the colour. 'In painting—to arrange or dispose' (*N.E.D.*).  
 'The whole,' etc. Cf. *S. Matthew*, ix. 12.  
 'As when,' etc. Thomson, *The Castle of Indolence*, St. 64.
231. 'Yea, into our heart of hearts.' Cf. *Hamlet*, III. 2. 78.  
 'The volumes,' etc. Roscommon, *Horace's Art of Poetry*.  
 'That dallies,' etc. Cf. *Twelfth Night*, II. 4. 48.
232. 'Wit at the helm,' etc. Cf. 'Youth on the prow, and Pleasure at the helm.  
 Gray, *The Bard*, 74.
233. A butt, according to the Spectator, etc. See *The Spectator*, No. 47.  
 Dedicated his cain to Sir Walter Scott. Cf. vol. xi. p. 76 and note.
235. 'Hew you,' etc. Cf. *Julius Cæsar*, II. 1. 174.  
*Tempora mollia fandi.* Cf. *Æneid*, IV. 293-4.  
 'Not to admire,' etc. Pope, *Imitations of Horace*, Epistles I. vi. 1-2.  
*The Westminster School.* Cf. the dialogue, 'The New School of Reform,' in  
 vol. XII.
236. 'Milk of human kindness.' *Macbeth*, I. 5. 18.

## ESSAY XXII. ON A SUN-DIAL

*The New Monthly Magazine*, October 1827, unsigned. First reprinted by Hazlitt's son in *Sketches and Essays* (1839).

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238. 'To carve out dials,' etc. 3 *Henry VI.*, II. 5. 24.  
*As I rode along the Brenta.* Cf. *Notes of a Journey* (vol. x. p. 266).  
 'Morals on the time.' *As You Like It*, II. 7. 29.
240. 'How sweet the moonlight,' etc. *The Merchant of Venice*, v. I. 54.
241. *In the room where I am.* At Winterslow Hut, presumably. Cf. the last paragraph of the essay.  
*The account given by Rousseau.* See *Les Confessions*, Partie II. Livre XI.  
 'Allons, mon fils,' etc. *Ibid.*, Partie I. Livre I.  
 'Lend it,' etc. Cf. *Hamlet*, I. 2. 250.
242. 'With its brazen ibroat,' etc. Cf. *King John*, III. 3. 38.  
 'Swinging slow,' etc. *Il Penseroso*, 76.  
*A tale of other times.* See vol. IV., note to p. 155.  
*De non apparentibus,* etc. Cf. vol. XII. p. 50.
243. I. 13. 'Our attention' substituted for 'its attention' in magazine text.  
 'The poor man's only music.' Coleridge, *Frost at Midnight*, 29.  
*Cologne and Rouen.* Cf. *Notes of a Journey* (vol. x. pp. 100, 299).
244. 'Goes to church,' etc. Cf. *Twelfth Night*, I. 3. 136.  
 'Sing those witty rhymes,' etc. Cf. Wordsworth, *The Fountain*, 13-15.  
 'Wby dance ye, mortals,' etc. Unidentified.  
 'As in a map,' etc. Cowper, *The Task*, vi. 17.
245. 'With light-winged toys,' etc. Cf. *Otello*, I. 3. 269.  
 'Diana and her fawn,' etc. Cf. vol. x. p. 107.  
 'With lack-lustre eye.' *As You Like It*, II. 7. 21.  
*I have done something of the kind once before.* He probably refers to the sketch of his father in 'My First Acquaintance with Poets' (*ante*, pp. 110-11). Cf. also the conclusion of the essay 'On Court Influence' (vol. VII. pp. 241-2).

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### ESSAY XXIII. WHY THE HEROES OF ROMANCES ARE INSIPID

*The New Montbly Magazine*, November 1827, unsigned. First reprinted by Hazlitt's son in *Sketches and Essays* (1839).

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246. 'To gild refined gold,' etc. *King John*, iv. 2. 11-16, from memory.
247. 'Faultless monsters.' John Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, *Essay on Poetry*.  
*The grand Cyruses, the Artamenes*. Mlle. de Scudéry's *Artamène ou le Grand Cyrus* was published in 10 vols., 1649-53.  
*Oroondates*. In La Calprenède's *Cassandra*.  
 'Mistress' eyebrow.' *As You Like It*, II. 7. 149.
248. 'Fairest of the fair.' Cf. *Love's Labour's Lost*, II. 1. 239.  
 'Cassandra.' Cf. *ante*, p. 112 and note.  
 'Be mine to read,' etc. Gray, *Letters* (ed. Tovey), I. 97.  
*The Duke de la Rochefoucault*. Part-author, according to the title-page, with Madame de la Fayette of *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678), whose other novels are *La Princesse de Montpensier* (1662) and *Zayde* (1670). Cf. *ante*, p. 208.  
*The Duke de Nemours*. In *La Princesse de Clèves*.
249. 'Ugly all over,' etc. See vol. IV., note to p. 211.
250. *The basbed mutton kept waiting for him*. Cf. *ante*, p. 180 and note.  
*Narcissa and Emilia Gauntlet*. *Narcissa* in *Roderick Random*; *Emilia Gauntlet* in *Peregrine Pickle*; *Winifred Jenkins* in *Humpbry Clinker*.
251. 'Her heroes,' etc. Cf. 'Most women have no characters at all.' Pope, *Moral Essays*, II. 2.  
*Theodore, Valancourt*. *Theodore* in *The Romance of the Forest*; *Valancourt* in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.  
*Miss Milner*. *Miss Milner* and *Dorriforth* in *A Simple Story* (1791); *Lord Norwynne* in *Nature and Art* (1796).
252. *Frank Osbaldistone, Henry Morton*. In *Rob Roy and Old Mortality*.
254. 'All germins,' etc. *King Lear*, III. 2. 8.  
 'Temperance that may give it smoothness.' *Hamlet*, III. 2. 8.  
 'Tears such as angels shed [weep].' *Paradise Lost*, I. 620.

### ESSAY XXIV. THE SHYNESS OF SCHOLARS

*The New Montbly Magazine*, December 1827, unsigned. First reprinted by Hazlitt's son in *Literary Remains* (1836).

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254. 'And of bis port,' etc. *The Canterbury Tales*. The Prologue, 69.
255. 'If you have not seen,' etc. Cf. *As You Like It*, III. 2. 41.
256. 'Fools rush in,' etc. Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*, III. 625.
257. 'In peace,' etc. *Henry V.*, III. 1. 3-14.
258. *Oh malore!*  
 'Gods of bis idolatry.' Cf. *Romeo and Juliet*, II. 2. 114.
259. *The Knight of La Mancha, when soundly beaten*. *Don Quixote*, Part I. Book III. chap. xv.  
 'Will not have their nothings monster'd,' etc. Cf. *Coriolanus*, II. 2. 82.
260. 'Vix ea nostra voco.' Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XIII. 141.
261. 'Scholar's melancholy.' *As You Like It*, IV. 1. 10.  
 'In which be held his solitary reign.' Cf. Gray's *Elegy*, Stanza III.
262. *Porson*. Richard Porson (1759-1808), Greek scholar and critic. Cf. vol. VIII. pp. 199-200.

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262. 'From humble porter [port],' etc. James Townley, *High Life Below Stairs*, Act II. Scene 1. Cf. *ante*, p. 356.  
 'Modest as morning,' etc. *Troilus and Cressida*, I. 3. 229.  
 263. 'Deprived of its natural patrons,' etc. Cf. Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution* (ed. Payne, p. 93).

### ESSAY XXV. ON PERSONAL IDENTITY

*The Monthly Magazine*, January 1828, unsigned. First reprinted by Hazlitt's son (with omissions) in *Winterslow* (1850).

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264. 'Ha! bere be three,' etc. *King Lear*, III. 4. 108.  
 'If I were not Alexander,' etc. The saying is given by Plutarch.  
 'Wishing to be,' etc. Cf. Shakespeare, *Sonnets*, xxix.  
 265. 'The rub that makes,' etc., and following quotations. Cf. *Hamlet*, III. 1. 65-9:  
     'Ay, there's the rub;  
     For in that sleep of death what dreams may come  
     When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
     Must give us pause. There's the respect  
     That makes calamity of so long life.'  
 266. 'What more felicity,' etc. Spenser, *Muioptomos*, St. 27.  
 'That something still,' etc. Cf. Pope, *An Essay on Man*, IV. 3-4.  
 'Very [writ in] choice Italian.' *Hamlet*, III. 2. 274.  
 Lord D——. Lord Dillon. Henry Augustus Dillon-Lee, 13th Viscount (1777-1832), whose acquaintance Hazlitt made in the Landor circle in Florence. He was the author of *A Discourse upon the Theory of Legitimate Government* (1817), and of a novel, *Sir Richard Maltravers* (1822).  
 267. 'Vows made in haste [pain],' etc. *Paradise Lost*, IV. 97.  
 'The native bue,' etc. Cf. *Hamlet*, III. 1. 84-5.  
 268. 'Glades mild-opening to the genial day.' Unidentified.  
 'Sbut up in measureless content.' *Macbeth*, II. 1. 16.  
 'I'd sooner [had rather] be a dog,' etc. *Julius Caesar*, IV. 3. 27.  
 Sir Thomas Lettbridge. Tory member for Somersetshire. Cf. vol. VIII. p. 94 and note.  
 Could I have had my will, etc. Hazlitt wrote this essay at Winterslow, copying this passage (to 'proud and not vulgar' on the next page) into the album of his publisher Cowden Clarke's sister, Mrs. Jane Towers, and dating it 'November 21, 1827.' The passage as copied from the MS. (presumably just written) presents the usual minor differences from the printed text. In the album (sold at Sotheby's in June 1932) Hazlitt says: 'Since I am got into quotation, do not think it impertinent if I quote something of my own. My sending it to you shews too well the good opinion I have of it.'  
 'Ethereal braid,' etc. Cf. 'With Brede ethereal wove.' Collins, 'Ode to Evening,' 7. This quotation, which Hazlitt makes in several slightly varying forms, he appears to have assimilated to another, in its turn a 'composite'—the Miltonic 'ethereal mould, sky-tinctured' (vol. VIII., note to p. 255).  
 269. *Had I been a lord, I should have married Miss* —. See introductory note to *Liber Amoris*, in vol. IX.  
 'Give me a crown,' etc. Cf. 3 *Henry VI.*, I. 4. 10.  
 'Monarchise,' etc. *Richard II.*, III. 2. 165.  
 The double of —. George IV., perhaps.



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269. 'Tenth transmitters,' etc. Richard Savage, *The Bastard*.  
*Royal wax-work*. Hazlitt is repeating a phrase from *Political Essays* (vol. vii. p. 28).
270. 'In the catalogue,' etc. Cf. *Macbeth*, III. 1. 92.  
 'Swinish multitude.' Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution* (ed. Payne, p. 93).  
*Tbat fell jailer*. Sir Hudson Lowe. Cf. 'The fell serjeant, death.' *Hamlet*, v. 2. 350.  
 'Glared round his soul,' etc. Cf. vol. xii. p. 76.
271. 'The drawing-room into a Green-room.' Unidentified.  
 'The fair,' etc. Cf. *As You Like It*, III. 2. 10.  
*The person who bought Punch*. Cf. vol. ix. p. 208.  
 [Sancho Panza discovered. *Don Quixote*, Part II. Book II. chaps. xliii., liii.  
*Why will Mr. Cobbett persist*. Cobbett had recently (1826) unsuccessfully contested Preston. Cf. vol. xi. p. 277 and note.  
*The bird described by Chaucer*. See *The Canterbury Tales*, The Manciple's Tale, 59 *et seq.*, and The Squiere's Tale, 603 *et seq.*
272. 'Ab! why so soon,' etc. Unidentified.  
 'In no haste to be venerable.' Unidentified.
273. *It has been ingeniously urged*. See vol. iv., note to p. 40; and cf. vol. xii. p. 117.  
 'A certain tender bloom,' etc. See *ante*, note to p. 109.  
*His preferring Rowe and Dryden*. See *The Vicar of Wakefield*, chap. xviii.  
 'Stuff o' the conscience.' *Othello*, I. 2. 2.  
*Rapbael's Assembly of the Just*. See *ante*, p. 149.
274. 'Laggard age.' Collins, Ode, *The Passions*, 112.  
*Like Benvenuto Cellini*. See vol. x. p. 219 and note.

## ESSAY XXVI. THE MAIN-CHANCE

*The New Monthly Magazine*, February 1828, unsigned. First reprinted by Hazlitt's son in *Literary Remains* (1836), with omissions, and with MS. additions which are reproduced in the notes.

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275. 'Search then,' etc. Pope, *Moral Essays*, III. 174-79.
278. l. 8. 'The text of *Literary Remains* continues this paragraph from the MS. as follows:

'An old maid in the same northern school of humanity calling upon some young ladies, her neighbours, was so alarmed and scandalized at finding the *safe* open in their absence, that she engaged herself to drink tea the same afternoon, for the express purpose of reading them a lecture on the unheard-of imprudence and impropriety of such an example, and was mobbed on her way home by the poor servant-girl (who had been made the subject of her declamation) in return for her uncalled-for interference. *She* had nothing to fear, nothing to lose: *her safe* was carefully locked up. Why then all this flutter, fidgetty anxiety, and itch of meddling? Out of pure romantic generosity—because the idea of any thing like comfort or liberality to a servant shocked her economical and screwed-up prejudices as much as the impugning any article of her religious or moral creed could have done. The very truisms and literal refinements of this passion are then sheer impertinence. The housekeeper came into the parlour of a "big ba' bouse," in the same land of cakes and hospitality, to say that the workmen had refused to eat their dinner.—"Why

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so ?"—Because there was nothing but sowins and sour milk.—"Then they must go without a dinner," said the young mistress delighted; "there is nothing else in the house for them." Yet the larder at that time groaned with cold rounds of beef, hams, pasties, and the other plentiful remains of a huge entertainment the day before. This was flippancy and ill-nature, as well as a wrong notion of self-interest. Is it at all wonderful that a decent servant-girl, when applied to to go to this place, laughed at the idea of a service where there was nothing to eat? Yet this attention to the *main-chance* on her part, had it come to the lady's knowledge, would have been treated as a great piece of insolence. So little conception have such people of their own obligations or<sup>1</sup> the claims of others! The clergyman of the parish (prolific in this sort of anecdote), a hearty, good sort of man enough, but irritable withal, took it into his head to fly into a violent passion if ever he found the glasses or spoons left out in the kitchen, and he always went into the kitchen to look after this sort of excitement. He pretended to be mightily afraid that the one would be broken (to his irreparable loss) and the other stolen, though there was no danger of either: he wanted an excuse to fret and fume about something. On the death of his wife he sent for her most intimate friend to condole and consult with, and having made some necessary arrangements, begged as a peculiar favour that she would look into the kitchen to see if the glasses and silver spoons were in their places. She repressed a smile at such a moment out of regard to his feelings, which were serious and acute; but burst into a fit of unrestrained laughter as soon as she got home. So ridiculous a thing is human nature, even to ourselves! Either our actions are absurd, or we are absurd in our constant censure and exposure of others. I would not from choice go into these details, but I might be required to fill up a vague outline; and the examples of folly, spite, and meanness are unfortunately "sown like a thick scurf o'er life!"<sup>2</sup>

279. *The gentleman who purchased Fonthill.* Beckford sold Fonthill to John Farquhar in 1822.
282. Note. '*A Mad World*,' etc. John Taylor, *Wandering to see the Wonders of the West* (1649).
283. '*Now all ye ladies*,' etc. These lines by Scott form the motto of chap. xii. of *The Betrothed*, where they are entitled 'Family Quarrels.' The text of *Literary Remains* adds a footnote to this quotation as follows:  
 "Have I not seen a household where love was not?" says the author of the "Betrothed;" "where, although there was worth and good will, and enough of the means of life, all was imbibed by regrets, which were not only vain, but criminal?"—"I would take the *Ghost's* word for a thousand pound," or in preference to that of any man living, though I was told in the streets of Edinburgh, that Dr. Jamieson, the author of the "Dictionary," was quite as great a man!
285. '*Some trick*,' etc. *Coriolanus*, iv. 4. 21.
286. *Says a shrewd, bard-bearded Scotsman.* Whom I have not identified. *Mr. Bartholine Saddletree.* In *The Heart of Midlothian.* *Peter Peebles.* In *Redgauntlet*.
287. *The Baron of Bradwardine*, etc. In *Waverley*.  
 '*The age of chivalry*,' etc. Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution* (ed. Payne, p. 89).  
 '*Smack of honour*.' *Macbeth*, i. 2. 44.

<sup>1</sup> 'On' in *Literary Remains*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Middleton, *The Witch*, Act i. Scene 2.

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287. 1. 21. The text of *Literary Remains* inserts the following passage after 'private brawls':

'But to return to our Edinburgh shop-keepers, those practical models of wisdom, and authentic epitomes of human nature. Say that by their "canny ways and pawky looks" they keep their names out of the "Gazette," yet still care (not the less perhaps) mounts behind their counters, and sits in their back-shops. A tradesman is not a bankrupt at the year's end. But what does it signify, if he is hen-pecked in the mean time, or quarrels with his wife, or beats his apprentices, or has married a woman twice as old as himself for her money, or has been jilted by his maid, or fuddles himself every night, or is laying in an apoplexy by over-eating himself, or is believed by nobody, or is a furious Whig or Tory, or a knave, or a fool, or one envious of the success of his neighbours, or dissatisfied with his own, or surly, or eaten up with indolence and procrastination, never easy but bashful and awkward in company (though with a vast desire to shine) or has some personal defect or weak side on which the Devil is sure to assail him, and the venting his spleen and irritability on which, through some loop-hole or other, makes the real business and torment of his life—that of his shop may go on as it pleases. Such is the perfection of reason and the triumph of the sovereign good, where there are no strong passions to disturb, or no great vices to sully it! The humours collect, the will will have head, the petty passions ferment, and we start some grievance or other, and hunt it down every hour in the day, or the machine of *still-life* could not go on even in North Britain. But were I to grant the full force and extent of the objection, I should still say that it does not bear upon my view of the subject or general assertion, that reason is an unequal match for passion. Business is a kind of gaoler or task-master, that keeps its vassals in good order while they are under its eye, as the slave or culprit performs his task with the whip hanging over him, and punishment immediately to follow neglect; but the question is, what he would do with his recovered freedom, or what course the mind will for the most part pursue, when in the range of its general conduct it has its choice to make between a distant, doubtful, sober, rational good (or *average* state of being), and some one object of comparatively little value, that strikes the senses, flatters our pride, gives scope to the imagination, and has all the strength of passion and inclination on its side. The *main-cance* then is a considerable exception, but not a fair one or a case in point, since it falls under a different head and line of argument.'

1. 5 from bottom. The text of *Literary Remains* continues the sentence from the MS.: 'and are on most occasions ready to exclaim,—  
"An ounce of sweet is worth a pound of sour."'

289. 1. 7. The text of *Literary Remains* inserts the following sentence after 'a figure in Parliament':

'A servant-girl stays in her place and does her work, though perhaps lazy and slatternly, because no immediate temptation occurs strong enough to interfere with the necessity of gaining her bread, but she goes away with a bastard-child, because here passion and desire come into play, though the consequence is that she loses not only her place, but her character and every prospect in life.'

290. 'Masterless passion,' etc. *The Merchant of Venice*, IV. 1. 51–2 (Pope's text). Note. *I have said somewhere*. In *The Round Table* (vol. IV. p. 159).

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### ESSAY XXVII. ON KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD

*The London Weekly Review*, December 1, 8 and 15, 1827, signed 'W.H.' First reprinted by Hazlitt's son in *Sketches and Essays* (1839).

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290. 'Who shall go about,' etc. Cf. *The Merchant of Venice*, II. 9. 38.
291. 'Subtle as the fox,' etc. Cf. *Cymbeline*, III. 3. 40.
292. 'The children of the world,' etc. Cf. *S. Luke*, xvi. 8.
292. 'To see ourselves,' etc. Burns, *To a Louse*, St. 8.
292. 'No figures,' etc. Cf. *Julius Cæsar*, II. 1. 231.
292. 'His soul,' etc. Pope, *An Essay on Man*, I. 101-2.
293. 'What shall it profit,' etc. *S. Mark*, viii. 36.
293. *Non ex quovis*, etc. Erasmus, *Adagiorum Cbiliades*, 'Munus aptum.'
293. 'No mark or likelihood.' 1 *Henry IV.*, III. 2. 45.
294. 'The soul must be subdued,' etc. Cf. *Othello*, I. 3. 251.
294. *Bub Doddington said*, etc. Cf. vol. VIII. p. 100 and note.
294. *Salus populi*, etc. *The Twelve Tables*, *De Officio Consulis*.
294. *The old ballad*. This does not seem to be readily identifiable.
295. *Mr. Cobbett seemed disappointed*, etc. See *The Political Register* for October 29, 1825, where Cobbett deploras the fact that Baron Maseres (1731-1824), who had visited him in prison, had left the bulk of his large property to a 'little Protestant parson.' Cf. *Conversations of Northcote* (vol. XI. p. 238 and note).
295. 'His patron's ghost,' etc. Cf. Thomson, *The Castle of Indolence*, I. St. 51.
296. 'Never standing upright,' etc. See Macklin's *The Man of the World*, Act II. Scene 1.
296. 'In large heart enclosed.' Cf. 'In small room large heart enclos'd,' *Paradise Lost*, VII. 486.
296. 'The world and its dread laugh.' Thomson, *The Seasons*, Autumn, 233.
297. 'The heart of man,' etc. Cf. *Jeremiah*, xvii. 9.
297. 'As the flesh,' etc. Cf. *Measure for Measure*, II. 1. 267.
297. 'Tread the primrose path,' etc. Cf. *Hamlet*, I. 3. 50.
297. 'If thine eye,' etc. Cf. *S. Matthew*, v. 29.
297. 'The little chapel-bell,' etc. Hazlitt refers to 'The Chapel Bell,' an early poem of Southey's (1793), and *The Book of the Church*, published by Southey in 1824.
297. *Camille-Desmoulins*, etc. Camille Desmoulins (1760-94), the well-known Revolutionary pamphleteer; Camille Jordan (1771-1821), called 'Jordan Carillon,' from a speech (July 4, 1797) in which he proposed to restore the use of bells to the clergy. See *Life of Napoleon*, chap. 15.
297. 'His own miniature-picture,' etc. 'On my own Miniature Picture' (1796).
298. 'Give us pause.' *Hamlet*, III. 1. 68.
299. *Somewhere calling Tom Paine a great writer*. See the account of Paine as a writer in Hazlitt's 'Character of Cobbett' (vol. VIII. pp. 51-2).
299. 'Does somewhat smack.' Cf. *The Merchant of Venice*, II. 2. 18.
- Reaction. A comparatively new word at Hazlitt's date: hence his italicization, here and elsewhere.
- I have been accused of abusing dissenters*. See the *Round Table* paper, 'On the Tendency of Sects,' in vol. IV.
- I have said that the church people*, etc. See 'On the Clerical Character' in *Political Essays* (vol. VII.).
- I have laughed at the Methodists*. See the *Round Table* paper, 'On the Causes of Methodism,' in vol. IV.
300. *My old friend Peter Finnerty*. Peter Finnerty (1766?-1822) of *The Morning Chronicle*. See vol. VII., note to p. 212.

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300. *Something I had written about the Scotch.* I have not identified the passage; but cf. *ante*, p. 101.  
*When I told* —. Jeffrey. This would be in Edinburgh, in May 1824, the 'work' being *The Spirit of the Age*, which was published shortly afterwards. See *Life*, p. 371.  
*'In some sort handled.'* Cf. *Henry V.*, II. 3. 39.
301. *According to Mandeville.* Cf. *Fable of the Bees*, Part I., Remarks on line 11 (edit. 1806).  
*'The high and palmy state.'* Cf. *Hamlet*, I. 1. 113.  
*'Keep this dreadful pudder,' etc.* *King Lear*, III. 2. 50 (Popc's text).
302. *'When a great wheel,' etc.* Cf. *Ibid.*, II. 4. 73.  
*When it is observed, etc.* *Tom Jones*, Book 1. chap. 9.  
*Sir Walter Scott has twice made a fortune, and twice lost it.* The fortune made by his poems in the Ballantyne crisis of 1812-13, and the fortune made by his novels in the Constable crash of 1826.  
*'Will be the fatal Cleopatra,' etc.* Dr. Johnson, Preface to Shakespeare (*Works*, Oxford, 1825, vol. v. p. 118).
303. *'Reformer nor a housebreaker.'* Hazlitt is recalling Southey's phrase (vol. VII. p. 196).

### ESSAY XXVIII. ON PUBLIC OPINION

*The London Weekly Review*, January 19, 1828, signed 'W.H.' First reprinted by Hazlitt's son (together with the next essay) in *Winterslow* (1850).

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303. *'Scared at the sound,' etc.* Cf. Collins's Ode, *The Passions*, 20.
305. *'The world rings,' etc.* Cowper, *The Task*, III. 129-30.  
*'No man knoweth,' etc.* Cf. *S. John*, III. 8.  
*In the way that Mr. Locke points out.* See 'On Locke's Essay' (vol. II. pp. 168-9).
306. *'Casting a dim religious light.'* *Il Penseroso*, 160.
307. *The Lady of Loretto.* Whose shrine, at Loreto, near Ancona, was formerly a great resort for pilgrims.
308. *'Wink and shut,' etc.* See *ante*, note to p. 20.  
*'Fed fat,' etc.* Cf. *The Merchant of Venice*, I. 3. 48.

### ESSAY XXIX. ON THE CAUSES OF POPULAR OPINION

*The London Weekly Review*, February 16, 1828, signed 'W.H.' First reprinted by Hazlitt's son (as part of the preceding essay) in *Winterslow* (1850).

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308. *The Editors of the Edinburgh Encyclopædia.* *The Edinburgh Encyclopædia* (18 vols., 1810-30) was edited by Sir David Brewster.
309. *'Among the rocks,' etc.* Cf. *Michael*, 455-7.  
*Hobbes is of opinion.* See 'On the Writings of Hobbes' (vol. II. p. 138).  
*'A man of ten thousand.'* Cf. *Hamlet*, II. 2. 179.
310. *'Who loved not wisely,' etc.* *Othello*, V. 2. 343-5, from memory.
311. *Blown stifling back upon ourselves.* A Milton reminiscence:—

'No more avails than breath against the wind,  
 Blown stifling back on him that breathes it forth.'

*Paradise Lost*, XI. 312-13.

*Fate, Free Will, etc.* *Ibid.*, II. 560.

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312. *Till I began to paint, etc.* For Hazlitt's early difficulty in writing cf. 'On Reading Old Books' (vol. xii. p. 229).  
*He encouraged me to write a book.* For Coleridge's part in his first book, *An Essay on the Principles of Human Action*, cf. 'My First Acquaintance with Poets' (ante, pp. 114, 121) and 'A Reply to Z' (vol. ix. pp. 3-4).  
 γ—. Jeffrey.
313. *The Editor of the Atlas.* Robert Rintoul (1787-1858) started *The Atlas* in 1826, and after a year left it with his staff to found *The Spectator*. The present reference is presumably to a review of *The Plain Speaker* and of *Notes of a Journey* together (May 28, 1826), which said: 'Mr. Hazlitt, who is manifestly author of these two books, possesses the ingenious art of selling his literary productions four or five times over. . . . The Plain Speaker is a very obscure speaker, who has spoken all he has to say a long time ago in certain magazines entitled the London and the New Monthly.' The 'common friend' alluded to was probably John Hunt, who had Hazlitt's painting of 'An Old Woman' with him in Coldbath Fields during his imprisonment in 1822 (see *Life*, p. 349, and 'On the Pleasure of Painting,' vol. viii. p. 8 and note). Rintoul's successor in the editorship of *The Atlas* was Robert Bell (1800-67), for whom Hazlitt began to write regularly at the end of 1828. See vol. xx. of the present edition.
- Except one that appeared in the Retrospective Review.* *The Retrospective Review*, for the criticism of old literature, ran from 1820 to 1828, latterly under the editorship of Henry Southern (1799-1852), final proprietor of *The London Magazine*. The contributions were not signed, and I have not identified the one to which Hazlitt alludes. Nor, in view of his disclaimer, does it appear to matter.

### ESSAY XXX. A FAREWELL TO ESSAY-WRITING

*The London Weekly Review*, March 29, 1828, signed 'W.H.' First reprinted by Hazlitt's son (with omissions) in *Winterslow* (1850).

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313. 'This life is best,' etc. *Cymbeline*, III. 3. 29.  
 'A friend,' etc. Cf. Cowper, *Retirement*, 741-2.
314. 'Beautiful mask! I know thee!' Unidentified.  
 'Done its spiriting gently.' Cf. *The Tempest*, I. 2. 298.  
 'The credulous hope,' etc. Byron, *Don Juan*, I. ccxvi. 5.  
 'The spring,' etc. Coleridge, *Christabel*, 22.  
 'Fields are dank,' etc. Milton's Sonnet (xx.), 'Lawrence, of virtuous father virtuous son.'  
 'It left its little life in air.' Unidentified.
315. 'Peep through the blanket,' etc. Cf. *Macbeth*, I. 5. 54.  
 'Open all the cells,' etc. Cowper, *The Task*, vi. 11-12.  
*Eighteen summers ago.* In 1810 Hazlitt was resident at Winterslow, and was visited in the summer by the Lambs (*Life*, pp. 125-6).  
 'Of all the cities,' etc. Dryden, *Theodore and Honoria*, 1-2.  
 'Which when Honoria view'd,' etc. *Ibid.*, 342-3.
316. 'And made thy insult,' etc. Dryden, *Sigismunda and Guiscardo*, 668-9.  
*Leigh Hunt's mention of Moore.* See Hunt's *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries* (I. 284), published by Henry Colburn in January 1828.  
 'Let honour,' etc. Epilogue to N. Lee's *Mithridates, King of Pontus*, 16-17.  
 'Fall'n,' etc. Scott, *Glenfinlas*, last stanza.
317. *Mr. Gifford once said, etc.* See vol. xi. p. 123.

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317. *Mr. Hunt has missed the opportunity of explaining the character of a friend.* In his *Lord Byron* (see above). As we learn over page, the chapter on Hazlitt was suppressed, and the allusions to him in the book are only incidental. In his preface Leigh Hunt refers to the omission of the article, 'not on Mr. Hazlitt's account, or my own; for however I might regret speaking disagreeable truths of any man, much more of one whose unquestionable love of truth would have reconciled him to hearing them, the article had quite enough of what was panegyric in it to do him justice.' It may have been that written by Hunt in Florence and shown by him to Hazlitt on the latter's visit in 1825, of which Mr. W. C. Hazlitt, writing presumably on the hearsay evidence of the Leigh Hunt circle, gives us an account. 'When Leigh Hunt was in Italy, my grandfather, then newly married to his second wife, paid him a visit and dined with him. It seems that Mr. Hunt was piqued by the manner in which my grandfather on one or two occasions, in those fits of spleen which sometimes came over him, retorted on him; and L. H. became anxious to prove to Mr. Hazlitt that he could do the same if he chose. He selected the present opportunity to do so, and before dinner was served, L. H. said to Mrs. Hazlitt, "I have something to show Hazlitt, but I will not let him see it till after dinner, as it might spoil his appetite." "Oh!", said Mrs. Hazlitt, "it will do him good." Thereupon Hunt gave Hazlitt a paper, in which he had spoken his mind pretty freely on the sore subject, and Hazlitt sat down in a chair and read it through. When he had done, he observed, "By God, sir, there's a good deal of truth in it." (Memoirs, 1867, II. 304.)

*A kind of substance in my brain.* See vol. I., note to p. 147.

*'The admired [observed] of all observers.'* *Hamlet*, III. 1. 162.

318. *'A melancholy hat.'*

'In the dumps John Ford alone by himself sat  
With folded arms and melancholy hat.'

Suckling, 'A Session of the Poets.'

*'I know not seems.'* *Hamlet*, I. 2. 76.

——. Lamb.

319. *'The other eleven obstinate fellows.'* Unidentified.

*Antonio.* Godwin's *Antonio* was produced at Drury Lane and damned Dec. 13, 1800.

*'Nor can I think,' etc.* Dryden, *The Hind and the Panther*, I. 315.

*Cbaucer's Flower and Leaf.* See vol. V. p. 27 and note.

*'And ayen,' etc.* *The Flower and the Leaf*, St. 15.

*Mr. and Miss L——.* Charles and Mary Lamb.

320. *Their pictures have since been seen together.* In the loan exhibition of 1824.

*Our basbed mutton with Amelia's.* Cf. *ante*, pp. 180 and 250.

*The result of which appeared . . . in the Edinburgh Review.* See the article, 'Standard Novels and Romances,' in vol. XVI.

*'And curtain close,' etc.* Cf. Collins's Ode, *On the Poetical Character*, 76.

### ESSAY XXXI. THE INFLUENCE OF BOOKS ON THE PROGRESS OF MANNERS

*The New Monthly Magazine*, May 1828, unsigned. First reprinted by the present editor in *New Writings: First Series*.

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321. *'Didicisse fideliter artes,' etc.* Ovid, *Ex Ponto Epist.*, II. ix. 47.

*Sully's Memoirs.* The *Mémoire* of the Duc de Sully (1560-1641) were pub-

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- lished in his own lifetime, and the first English translation in 1756. Cf. *The Life of Napoleon* (vol. xiii. pp. 569).
321. 'Egad! I found them,' etc. Cf. Sheridan, 'So I find they are all in a story. Egad,' etc. *The Duenna*, Act II. Scene 3. Dogberry uses much the same expression: 'Fore God, they are both in a tale' (*Much Ado*, iv. 2. 23).  
*Mrs. Radcliffe's Sicilian Romance*. First published in 1790. Mrs. Radcliffe died in 1823, and Hazlitt probably read this work in the memorial edition of her novels (Ballantyne's Novelist's Library) issued in 1824 with prefaces by Sir Walter Scott.  
 'Good old times.' Cf. vol. xi. p. 65 and elsewhere.  
 Note. *Melrose in Scotland*. Where Hazlitt stayed in April 1824, with his second wife, immediately following their marriage.
322. 'Brought sin [death] into the world,' etc. *Paradise Lost*, I. 3.  
 'Tis much.' *Taming of the Shrew*, Induction, ii. 118.  
 'The divine and human Majesty.' Cf. vol. vii. p. 258 and vol. xiv. p. 217.  
*Mr. Canning denied*. See 'Character of Mr. Canning' in vol. xi.  
*Pale tablet in St. Peter's*. Cf. ante, p. 149.
323. 'The swan's down feather on the tide.' Cf. *Antony and Cleopatra*, III. II. 48-9.  
*Sir Matthew Hale*. Judge and treatise writer (1609-76).  
 Note. *Lord Byron believed*. ?Leigh Hunt's information. Cf. his *Lord Byron*, 1828, I. 144.
324. *Sir Thomas Brown*. See the *Religio Medici*, Sections 30-31.  
 'Old proud keep' and 'its double belt,' etc. Burke, *Letter to a Noble Lord* (Bohn, v. 137).
325. 'Engine at the door,' etc. *Lycidas*, 130.  
 'Time-ballowed.' Wordsworth has this compound (*Excursion*, vii. 21).  
 'To see ourselves,' etc. Burns, *To a Louse*, 44.  
 'Show vice its own image,' etc. *Hamlet*, III. 2. 25.  
 'Curses, not loud but deep.' *Macbeth*, v. 3. 27.
326. 'Done in a corner.' *Acts*, xxvi. 26.
327. 'Bores through his castle walls,' etc. *Richard II.*, III. 2. 170.
328. 'A discipline of humanity.' Bacon, *Essays*, 'Of Marriage and Single Life.'  
 'The secrets of the grave.' *Cymbeline*, III. 4. 40.  
*Veluti in Speculum*. Cf. Terence, *Adelphi*, III. iii.  
 Note. *Ada Reis, A Tale*, by Lady Caroline Lamb (1823).
329. 'A cantrip slight.' Burns, *Tam O'Shanter*, 127.  
*Mr. Colman*. George Colman the Younger (1762-1836), dramatist, Examiner of Plays from 1824 to his death.  
*Mr. Stiel*. Richard Lalor Sheil (1791-1851), politician and dramatist. The play in question was his adaptation for Macready of Massinger's *Fatal Dowry* (1824). Cf. vol. xiii. p. 24, footnote.  
 'Modo me pone Thebis,' etc. Horace, *Epistolæ*, II. i. 213.
330. *A great authority*. Malthus.
331. *The Quarterly Review some time back*. See the article, 'Past and Present of the Country,' in the number for June 1825.  
 'To do aught good,' etc. *Paradise Lost*, I. 159.

### ESSAY XXXII. TRAVELLING ABROAD

*The New Monthly Magazine*, June 1828, unsigned. Another, and imperfect, version of the essay was printed by Hazlitt's son in the third edition of *Table-Talk* (1845-6), where he wrote: 'The essay "On Travelling Abroad" I found amongst other manuscripts of my father's, most of them merely *the copy* whence "Table Talk"



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and other works of his were printed, and I at first concluded that this also had been used. [After?] a diligent search, however, not merely through all the collected volumes of his works, but through all the various publications to which he contributed, regularly or occasionally, . . . I have no hesitation in announcing the Essay in question to be entirely new.' The essay was omitted, from this source, in error by Waller and Glover, and was first identified in and reprinted from the magazine by the present editor in *New Writings: First Series*.

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332. 'Ha! here's three,' etc. *Lear*, III. 4. 108.  
 'Dowlas, filthy dowlas.' I *Henry IV.*, III. 3. 79.  
 'But now a wood,' etc. *Macbeth*, v. 5. 45-6.  
 'In the eye of Phoebus,' etc. *Henry V.*, IV. 1. 293.  
 'Next day after dawn,' etc. *Ibid.*, IV. 1. 294-7.
333. *Mr. Macculloch.* John Ramsay M'Culloch (1789-1864), whose *Principles of Political Economy* were published in 1820.  
*Traveller's-Club.* Founded in 1819 by Lord Castlereagh.  
*Dr. Johnson remarked.* 'How little does travelling supply to the conversation of any man who has travelled.' (*Life*, ed. G. B. Hill, III. 352.) Cf. vol. VIII. p. 189.  
*Impression made on the French.* Napoleon's Italian spoils were in the Louvre from 1796-7 until their restoration under the Treaty of Vienna in 1816.  
 'If 'twere painted,' etc.  
     'Yet who shall count the numbers who opine,  
     Imperfect is the statue's faultless line,  
     And, if 'twere painted, 'twould be twice as fine?'  
         Joseph Fawcett, 'The Art of Poetry,' in *Poems* (1798).  
 'Timeo Danaos,' etc. Virgil, *Æneid*, II. 49.
334. *The patriotic Judge.* Cf. *Notes of a Journey* (vol. x. p. 248, footnote): 'Chief Justice Holt used to say, "there were more robberies committed in England than in Scotland, because we had better hearts."' Sir John Holt was Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench, 1689-1710. 'Elizabeth' here would consequently seem to be a slip for 'Anne.'  
 'We would not change,' etc. *As You Like It*, III. 2. 301.  
 'Ob! most small fault,' etc. *Lear*, I. 4. 288.  
 'Stand like greyhounds,' etc. *Henry V.*, III. 1. 31.  
*As Mr. Peel says.* His speech 'On the Police of the Metropolis' (February 28, 1828) is probably alluded to (*Speeches*, 1853, I. 556 *et seq.*).
335. 'All honourable men,' etc. *Julius Cæsar*, III. 2. 89.  
*Fontbill Abbey.* See Hazlitt's *London Magazine* paper, in vol. XVIII.
336. *An acquaintance of mine.* This was probably Patmore, who appears to have been resident in Paris at this date.
338. *When they had got the Apollo Belvidere in their possession.* Cf. vol. x. p. 165 and note.  
*David.* J. L. David (1748-1825), French historical painter.  
 'Want grace, who never wanted wit.' Pope, *Satires*, v.  
*An excellent judge.* This was Northcote. Cf. *Life of Napoleon* (vol. XIII. p. 61, footnote).
339. —. I do not know the lady's name with which, at this date, we ought to fill this blank.  
 'Nation of shopkeepers.' See vol. xv., note to p. 336.
340. *Trown out of a balloon.* The first ascent in a balloon was made in 1783. This form of aeronautics was in the pioneer stage during Hazlitt's lifetime.

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340. 'The toe of the citizen,' etc. *Hamlet*, v. 1. 152.  
 Note. *The bravo in Gil Blas*. Book x. chap. 10.
341. 'A species by himself.' Cowley, *The Praise of Pindar*.
342. 'The mind's eye.' *Hamlet*, i. 2. 185.  
*The bouse bere in the Rue de Chantereine*. Cf. *The Life of Napoleon*.  
 'Naturam expellas furcâ,' etc. Horace, *Epistolæ*, i. x. 24.  
*Sir Francis Wronghead*. In Vanbrugh and Cibber's *The Provoked Husband*.
343. *Matthew Bramble*. In Smollett's *Humphry Clinker*.  
*Come then, and let us away*. In the rest of the essay Hazlitt, in Paris, is summarising the memories and impressions of his Continental tour of 1825-6.  
 Cf. *Notes of a Journey* in vol. x.  
 'Those brave, sublunary [translunary] things.' Drayton, *Elegy to Henry Reynolds, Esq.*  
*Radicosani*. Cf. *Notes of a Journey* (vol. x. pp. 227-9).  
 'The earth hath bubbles,' etc. *Macbeth*, i. 3. 79.
344. 'Vain pomp and glory,' etc. *Henry VIII.*, iii. 2. 366.  
*Shock-dog*. 'A dog having long shaggy hair' (*N.E.D.*).  
 'Like quills,' etc. *Hamlet*, i. 5. 20.  
 The black ox. 'Misfortune, adversity.' Proverbial (*N.E.D.*).  
 'That peace,' etc. *Book of Common Prayer*.  
 Owe no allegiance to the elements. See vol. iv., note to p. 112.  
 'Our native dust and final bome.' A composite quotation. Cf.  
 ' . . . till we end  
 In dust, our final rest and native home,'

*Paradise Lost*, x. 1084-5 :

and

' . . . is this the way  
 I must return to native dust? '

*Ibid.*, xi. 462-3.

### ESSAY XXXIII. ON CANT AND HYPOCRISY

*The London Weekly Review*, December 6 and 13, 1828, unsigned. First reprinted by Hazlitt's son (with omissions) in *Sketches and Essays* (1839).

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345. 'If to do,' etc. *The Merchant of Venice*, i. 2. 13.  
*Curl*. Edmund Curll (1675-1747).  
*Some persons*. Horace Walpole, for example. Cf. vol. xvi. p. 142.  
*More nice than wise*. Unacknowledged from Cowper, 'Mutual Forbearance,' 20.  
 'The spirit,' etc. *S. Matthew*, xxvi. 41.
346. 'Most easily beset him.' Cf. *Hebrews*, xii. 1.  
*Video meliora proboque*, etc. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, vii. 20-1.
347. 'The scene in the Duenna.' Act iii. Scene 5.  
 'A little round, fat, oily man,' etc. *The Castle of Indolence*, i. St. 69.
348. *Lord Shaftesbury*. See *Characteristics*, An Inquiry concerning Virtue, or Merit, Part i. Sect. 11.  
 'Upon this bank,' etc. *Macbeth*, i. 7. 6.
349. *Says Voltaire*. I have not identified this allusion, which Hazlitt makes elsewhere.
350. 'Mighty coil and pudder.' *King Lear*, iii. 2. 50 (Pope's text).
351. *Some grave biographer*. Rowe, in his edition (1709), quoting John Aubrey (1626-97).

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351. *A French blackleg.* 'A turf swindler; also, a swindler in other species of gambling' (N.E.D.).
352. 'Eremites,' etc. *Paradise Lost*, III. 474-5.
353. 'Cant religious,' etc. See Byron's Letter to Murray on Bowles's *Strictures on the Life and Writings of Pope*. (Letters, etc., ed. Prothero, v. 536.)
354. *Mr. Liberal Snake.* See Disraeli's *Vision Grey*.  
*What Mr. Theodore Hook politely calls humbug.* 'A slang or cant word which came into vogue c. 1750' (N.E.D.). Cf. De Quincey: 'In fact, to borrow a coarse word, the mere impersonation of humbug' ('Rhetoric,' 1828).

### ESSAY XXXIV. ON FOOTMEN

*The New Monthly Magazine*, September 1830, unsigned. First reprinted by Hazlitt's son in *Sketches and Essays* (1839).

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354. *The genius of Ude.* Louis-Eustache Ude, whose book, *The French Cook; or the Art of Cookery developed in all its branches*, was published in 1813.  
*Sewell and Cross's.* Linen-drapers and silk-mercers, 44 and 45 Old Compton Street, Soho.  
*The Bazaar.* Established in 1815.
355. *Mr. Mill's Elements.* James Mill's *Element of Political Economy*, published 1821-2.  
*Mr. Macculloch's Principles of Political Economy.* Published 1825.  
*Lady Booby's love.* In *Tom Jones*.  
*'The Corinthian capitals,'* etc. Cf. Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution* (ed. Payne, p. 164).
356. 'Like brothers of the groves.' Unidentified.  
*Mr. N——.* *Sketches and Essays* prints 'Northcote.'  
*'High Life Below Stairs.'* By James Townley (1714-88), produced in 1759.
357. *Mr. C——.* Coleridge, no doubt.  
 l. 12. 'Hassock,' substituted for 'cassock' in the magazine text.  
*The footman, recorded by Lady Wortley Montagu.* See 'Epistle from Arthur Grey, the Footman, to Mrs. Murray' in *Works*.
358. 'Vine-covered bills,' etc. See vol. VIII., note to p. 189.  
*'As pigeons pick up peas.'* Cf. *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. 2. 315.  
*As if she had been up in a balloon.* See ante, note to p. 340.  
*'No more: where ignorance,'* etc. Gray, *On a Distant Prospect of Eton College*.
359. *M. de Bausset.* Louis François Joseph, Baron de Bausset (b. 1770), author of *Mémoires anecdotiques sur l'intérieur du palais* (1827-8). Cf. *Life of Napoleon*, introductory note (vol. XIII.).  
*Wear green spectacles.* Hazlitt refers elsewhere ('Aphorisms on Man,' in vol. XX.) to 'an editor, who flourishes about the town in virtue of a pair of green spectacles.' We do not seem to know the editor in question.

### ESSAY XXXV. ON EDITORS

*The Monthly Magazine*, November 1830, entitled 'A Chapter on Editors,' with the following editorial note: 'We give insertion to this article, one of the posthumous papers of Mr. Hazlitt, to shew that we do not consider ourselves implicated in the abuses complained of; and that we have no right to any share of indignation so whimsically lavished upon our fraternity.' The essay was republished by Hazlitt's son (with omissions) in *Sketches and Essays* (1839).

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360. 'Our withers,' etc. *Hamlet*, III. 2. 253.  
 l. 9. 'A sort of tittle-tattle' in the magazine and in *Sketches and Essays*. I have adopted the emendation suggested by Waller and Glover and endorsed by the late Professor Ker (*Essays and Studies of the English Association*, 1922).  
*The reading public.* For Coleridge's play on this phrase cf. vol. VII. p. 125 and vol. XVI. pp. 106, 112-13.  
 'Lay the flattering unction,' etc. Cf. *Hamlet*, III. 4. 145.  
 361. *The N.N. at the Tuileries.* Cf. 'On Living to One's-Self' (vol. VIII. p. 93).  
*As Mr. Horne Tooke said, etc.* See vol. XI. p. 52 and note.  
*Of no mark or likeness.* Unacknowledged from 1 *Henry IV.*, III. 2. 45.  
*There is no offence in it.* Cf. *Hamlet*, III. 2. 243.  
 362. 'A pepper-corn rent.' 'A nominal rent' (N.E.D.).  
 363. *We only know one Editor.* Of *Blackwood's Magazine*, no doubt. Cf. *ante*, p. 308.  
*'Ought to lie on no gentleman's table.'* Unidentified.  
*'More subtle web,' etc.* *The Faerie Queene*, II. xii. 77.  
*Others dine with Lords and Academicians.* James Perry, for example, editor of *The Morning Chronicle*. See the introductory note to vol. XVIII.  
*The proprietor of a leading journal.* John Walter, the second. Cf. Hazlitt's preface to *A View of the English Stage* (vol. V. p. 174).  
*At Lord's-Ground.* See *ante*, note to p. 154.  
 364. 'Here's the rub.' Cf. *Hamlet*, III. i. 69.

### ESSAY XXXVI. THE FREE ADMISSION

*The New Monthly Magazine*, July 1830, unsigned. First reprinted by Waller and Glover.

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366. 'Loop-holes of retreat.' Cowper, *The Task*, IV. 88.  
 'He is all ear and eye,' etc. Cf. *Comus*, 560-2.  
 'The fly,' etc. *The Beggar's Opera*, Act II. Scene 2.  
 367. 'Ob! leave me,' etc. Cf. Gray, *Descent of Odin*, 50.  
 'The arm-chair at an inn,' and following quotation. 'A tavern chair is the throne of human felicity.' Johnson (*Boswell's Life*, ed. G. B. Hill, II. 452, note 1).  
 'Witching time of night.' *Hamlet*, III. 2. 406.  
*Bid a gay defiance to mischief.* Cf. vol. VI. p. 160.  
*I would, if I could, etc.* An echo, and a conscious one no doubt, of Rousseau's wish regarding the spot where he first met Mme. de Warens: 'Que ne puis-je entourer d'un balustre d'or cette heureuse place!' (*Les Confessions*, Partie I, Livre II).  
*Young Kemble.* Charles Kemble (1775-1854), for whom see *A View of the English Stage*.  
 'Like bees in spring-time,' etc. *Paradise Lost*, I. 768-9.  
*Isabella or Belvidera.* Two famous parts of Mrs. Siddons', in *Isabella*; or *the Fatal Marriage*, by Garrick and Southerne, and Otway's *Venice Preserved* respectively. See *A View of the English Stage*.  
 'A discipline of humanity.' Bacon, *Essays*, 'Of Marriage and Single Life.'  
 368. 'Retire, the world shut out,' etc. Young, *Night Thoughts*, IX.  
 'Still, small voice.' 1 *Kings*, xix. 12.  
 Miss Ford. Hazlitt refers to Miss Forde as Cherry in *The Beaux'-Stratagem* (revived Covent Garden, Dec. 31, 1828). In *Lectures on the Comic Writers* VI. 88) he refers to the dialogue in Act III. Scene 2 as a 'love catechism.'

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368. *Mrs. Humby.* Mrs. Humby (fl. 1817-49) played Luise in Planché's *The Green-eyed Monster* at the Haymarket, Aug. 18, 1828. Wilkinson played Krout. *Mrs. Jordan's laugh in Nell.* See *ante*, p. 160 and note; and Hazlitt's dramatic criticism, *passim*.  
*Mrs. Goodall's Rosalind.* Charlotte Goodall, after acting at Bath, made her first appearance in London (Drury Lane, Oct. 2, 1788) as Rosalind. Nothing is known of her after 1813, when she was divorced. Hazlitt includes her Rosalind in his *Examiner* paper, 'Some of the Old Actors,' of April 27, 1828 (vol. xviii.).  
*The echo of Amiens' song.* As sung by Dignum. Cf. as above.  
*'Strut and fret,' etc.* *Macbeth*, v. 5. 25.  
 369. *'See o'er the stage,' etc.* Cf. Thomson, *The Seasons*, Winter, 646-8.  
*'Takes his ease.'* Cf. 1 *Henry IV.*, iii. 3. 93.  
*The dews of Castaly.* Cf. Spenser, *The Ruines of Time*, 431.  
 370. *'All that mighty heart,' etc.* Cf. Wordsworth's Sonnet, 'Earth has not anything to shew more fair.'  
*'Tby freedom,' etc.* Cf. 'Thy beauty hath made me effeminate.' *Romeo and Juliet*, iii. 1. 119.  
*'Teddy the Tiler.'* A farce by G. H. B. Rodwell (1800-52), produced at Covent Garden, Feb. 8, 1830.  
*'Robert the Devil.'* A 'Musical Romance' by Raymond, produced at Covent Garden, Feb. 2, 1830.  
*'What avails,' etc.* The Rev. Sneyd Davies, *To the Honourable and Reverend F. C. (Dodsley, A Collection of Poems*, vi. 138).  
*As Beau Brummell had his favourite leg.* Cf. the paper, 'Brummelliana,' in vol. xx.  
*Knit with the Graces, etc.*

'While universal Pan,  
 Knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance,  
 Led on th' eternal Spring.'

*Paradise Lost*, iv. 266-8.

'The frozen winter and the pleasant spring.' Unidentified.  
*Cowley's Gallery.* The reference is to Cowley's *The Cbronicle*.

### ESSAY XXXVII. THE SICK CHAMBER

*The New Monthly Magazine*, August 1830, unsigned. First reprinted by Alexander Ireland in his *Selections* (1889).

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371. *'The body of this death.'* *Romans*, vii. 24.  
*'Cooped and cabined in.'* Cf. *Macbeth*, iii. 4. 24.  
*'Peep through the blanket,' etc.* *Ibid.*, i. 5. 54.  
*'A consummation,' etc.* *Hamlet*, iii. 1. 63.  
*Hoc erat in votis.* Horace, *Satires*, ii. vi. 1.  
 372. *'Our very gorge rises.'* Cf. *Hamlet*, v. 1. 207.  
*'Hermit poor,' etc.* These lines are quoted in Lamb's *John Woodvil*, Act v.  
*'Vows made in pain,' etc.* *Paradise Lost*, iv. 97.  
*'The Devil,' etc.* This old proverb is quoted by Rabelais, *Liv. iv. Chap. 24*.  
 373. *'Like life and death,' etc.* Cf. Lamb, *John Woodvil*, Act ii.  
*'Trouble deaf Heaven,' etc.* Cf. Shakespeare, *Sonnets*, xxix.  
*'Moralise our complaints,' etc.* Cf. *As You Like It*, ii. 1. 44.  
*I see (as I awake).* At No. 6, Frith Street, where the room in which Hazlitt died may now be visited.

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373. 'They have drugged,' etc. Cf. *Macbeth*, II. 2. 6.  
 'Puzzling o'er the doubt.' Cf. Cowper, *The Needless Alarm*, 77-8.
374. 'Like Samson,' etc. Cowper, *The Task*, v. 737.  
 'The worst of every evil,' etc. Cf. *Temistocle*, Act III. Scene 2.
375. 'A world,' etc. Cf. Wordsworth, *Personal Talk*, 34.  
 'A foregone conclusion.' *Othello*, III. 3. 428.  
 'We see the children,' etc. Cf. Wordsworth, *Ode, Intimations of Immortality* 170-1.
376. *Paul Clifford*. Bulwer's *Paul Clifford* appeared in May 1830, with Colburn. We learn from Patmore (*My Friends and Acquaintance*, III. 155-7) that Hazlitt was meditating at the present date an article for the *Edinburgh Review* on the novels of Bulwer—*Falkland* (1827), *Pelham* (1828), *The Disowned* and *Devereux* (1829), and *Paul Clifford*—but that the subject was not congenial to the editor, Macvey Napier. Cf. Sadleir, *Bulwer*, 1931, pp. 230-32. The following unpublished letter to the publishers of the *Review*, in the handwriting of Hazlitt's son, may be read in this connection:
- 'Mr. Hazlitt is very sorry that he has been obliged to keep the Pelham, &c., but he was not quite sure as to whether he had to write an article respecting them. He has been some time confined to his bed, dangerously, and is consequently unable to take them himself or to see about sending another with them. If Messrs. Longman would direct any of their persons passing in this neighbourhood to call for them, Mr. Hazlitt would feel much obliged: he is already so for the loan of them.
- 'Monday, Sept. 6th, 1830.  
 6 Frith St., Soho.'
- He died twelve days later.
- 'Lively, audible,' etc. Cf. *Coriolanus*, IV. 5. 237.
- 'The true patbos,' etc. Burns, *Epistle to Dr. Blacklock*, 53-4.

### ESSAY XXXVIII. THE LETTER-BELL

*The Monthly Magazine*, March 1831, 'by the late William Hazlitt.' The essay was republished (with omissions) by Hazlitt's son in *Sketches and Essays* (1839).

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377. 'One entire,' etc. *Othello*, v. 2. 145.  
*As I write this.* At Frith Street.  
*The friends I had lately left.* His father, mother and sister, at the parental home at Wem.  
*The long line of blue hills.* Cf. 'Why Distant Objects Please' (vol. VIII. p. 256).  
*The road from — to —.* From Wem to Shrewsbury. Cf. *ante*, p. 107.  
 'And by the vision splendid,' etc. Cf. Wordsworth's *Ode, Intimations of Immortality*, 73-4.  
*It has again risen in the west.* The reference is to the 'Revolution of the Three Days' (July 27-9, 1830), when Charles X. abdicated and ended the Bourbon régime in France. Cf. 'On Personal Politics' in vol. XIX.  
 'What though the radiance,' etc. Wordsworth, *Ode, Intimations of Immortality*, 179-82, in the form in which Hazlitt invariably makes the quotation.  
 'Like morn,' etc. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, v. 310-11.  
*And may be not yet greet the yellow light,* etc. Cf. *ante*, p. 118.

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378. *And what shall we say to him.* It would be interesting to know whether Coleridge's attention was drawn to this, the last of Hazlitt's many adjurations and apostrophes. His immediate reaction to the news of Hazlitt's death was in a marked degree unsympathetic. Cf. *Life*, p. 421.  
*'And from his neck so free,' etc.* *The Ancient Mariner*, 289-91.  
*Any one else in the house.* I.e. in John Hazlitt's house, No. 12, Rathbone Place. Miss D——. I do not know that we are able to identify this lady.  
*'Airs and graces.'* Unidentified.
379. *Vangoyen.* Jan Van Goyen (1596-1666). Cf. vol. x. p. 36.  
*'The slow canal,' etc.* Goldsmith, *The Traveller*, 293-4.  
*'While with an eye,' etc.* Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey*, 47-9.
380. *'The secrets of the prison-house.'* Cf. *Hamlet*, 1. 5. 14.  
*'Entire affection,' etc.* Cf. *The Faerie Queene*, 1. viii. 40.  
*'His shame in crowds,' etc.* Cf. Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village*, 412.  
*'Made good digestion,' etc.* Cf. *Macbeth*, 111. 4. 38.  
*An ingenious friend and arch-critic.* Jeffrey, no doubt.  
*'More german to the matter.'* *Hamlet*, v. 2. 165.
381. *In Cowper's time, Mail-Coaches were hardly set up.* The mail-coach system was introduced in 1784, and even as Hazlitt was writing was in course of supersession by the railway.  
*'Hark !' etc.* Cowper, *The Task*, iv. 1 *et seq.*
382. *Lord Byron denies, etc.* See vol. viii. p. 210 and note.

